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# THE GREAT TEXTS OF THE BIBLE

# THE GREAT TEXTS OF THE BIBLE

EDITED BY THE REV.

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EDITOR OF "THE EXPOSITORY TIMES" "THE DICTIONARY OF THE BIBLE"
"THE DICTIONARY OF CHRIST AND THE GOSPELS" AND
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## II CORINTHIANS and GALATIANS

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## Comfort.

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort; who comforteth us in all our affliction, that we may be able to comfort them that are in any affliction, through the comfort wherewith we ourselves are comforted of God.—2 Cor. i. 3, 4.

1. Of what the heart is full the mouth will speak, and St. Paul begins this letter to the Corinthians, not, as he generally does, with compliments to the converts on their achievements and position, but with reflections on the weight of suffering that has been cast on him, what it means, and what purpose it serves. This is the theme of the whole Epistle; it is full from beginning to end of sorrow, which to the Christian turns into joy, weakness that is strength, defeat that passes into triumph. The circumstances of the Apostle when he wrote it amply explain how he was led to such thoughts. He had been looking quite recently into the face of death; in what happened to him at Ephesus he thought his end had come, and that he was to be hurried out of the world without seeing the appearance of Christ, on which he had set all his hope; and, on the other hand, the Corinthians, for whom he had done so much, from whom he hoped so much, had proved very disloyal to him. They had given ear to every kind of charge against him, had thought him weak and fickle, dishonest and designing, the preacher of an obscure and fanciful gospel, a visionary, a failure. Crushed by external calamity, disappointed, humbled, and embittered in the relations with his converts, driven to seek defences for his personal conduct and for the truth and substance of the message for which he had spent everything, he was led to think of the dark problem of suffering, and to ask why so much had been given him to bear, and what end his toil served. Of the Bible writers who have dealt with this great subject, the Apostle Paul must be reckoned not the least.

2. He begins with his usual doxology, "Blessed be God." He will have a great deal to say in this Epistle about affliction, but he begins upon another note. He begins with the contemplation of the mercies of God, and from that standpoint he surveys the field of his own trouble.

¶ Everything depends upon our point of view. I stood a week or two ago in a room which was furnished with wealthy pictures, and I fixed my gaze upon a Highland scene of great strength and glory. The owner of the picture found me gazing at this particular work, and he immediately said, "I am afraid you won't get the light on the hill." And sure enough, he was right. From my point of view I was contemplating a dark and storm-swept landscape, and I did not get the light on the hill. He moved me to another part of the room, and, standing there, I found that the scene was lit up with wonderful light from above. Yes, everything depends upon our point of view. If you are going to look upon your trouble, the primary question will be, "Where do you stand?" See where the Apostle Paul plants his feet. "Blessed be God!" That is view-point in the life of faith! Standing there we shall get the light on the hill. Paul takes his stand in the grace of God, and he gazes upon the ministry of mercies and comfort in the otherwise midnight wastes of affliction and pain. He begins, I say, in doxology. He sings a paean of mercies and comfort, and lifts his soul in adoration to God.[1]

## I.

### When Comfort Comes.

**"Who comforteth us in all our affliction."**

1. The desire for comfort may be a very high or a very low, a noble or a most ignoble wish. It is like the love of life, the wish to keep on living, which may be full of courage and patience or may be nothing but a cowardly fear of death. We know what kind of comfort it must have been that St. Paul prayed for, and for which he was thankful when it came. We have all probably desired comfort which he would have scorned, and prayed to God in tones which he would have counted unworthy alike of God and of himself.

[1] J. H. Jowett.

(1) What picture does the word "comfort" convey to your mind? Do you not almost instinctively think of it in a passive, in a somewhat selfish sense? The concrete picture of a comfortable person would have for its essentials good health, a fixed income, and for its immediate surroundings probably an arm-chair, a fire, a well-spread table, every possible sign of material friendly circumstances.

"Comfort," says Mrs. Pearsall Smith, "is pure and simple comfort, and it is nothing else. We none of us care for pious phrases, we want realities; and the reality of being comforted and comfortable seems to me almost more delightful than any other thing in life. We all know what it is. When as little children we have cuddled up into our mother's lap after a fall or a misfortune, and have felt her dear arms around us, and her soft kisses on our hair, we have had comfort. When, as grown up people, after a hard day's work, we have put on our slippers and seated ourselves by the fire, in an easy-chair with a book, we have had comfort. When, after a painful illness, we have begun to recover, and have been able to stretch our limbs and open our eyes without pain, we have had comfort. When some one whom we dearly love has been ill almost unto death, and has been restored to us in health again, we have had comfort. A thousand times in our lives, probably, have we said, with a sigh of relief, as of toil over or of burdens laid down, 'Well, this is comfortable,' and in that word 'comfortable' there has been comprised more of rest, and relief, and satisfaction, and pleasure, than any other word in the English language could possibly be made to express."

(2) But this is only a part, and the smallest part, of the comfort of the Bible. The word "comfortable" is really an active word. The derivation of the English word illustrates that perhaps better than the Greek word which it translates—*fort*, strong—and one very common old use of the verb "to comfort" simply meant to communicate strength. In Wycliffe's Bible of 1382, the words of Christ which read in our Version, "The child grew and waxed strong in spirit" are given, "The child waxed and was comforted in spirit." In Isaiah we have it, "He fastened it with nails"; in Wycliffe it is, "He comforted it with nails"; and a century and a half later, in Coverdale's Bible, it represents "Let your hands now therefore be comforted," instead of, as we have it,

"Therefore now let your hands be strengthened." When our fathers used this word "comfort," they meant clearly something more than the mere entertaining of a sentiment, however kindly, or utterance of words, however sympathetic. So we must so far clear the way by getting rid of the idea that comfort is simply soothing, right and pleasant as that may be under certain conditions.

¶ Can we not learn something from a child's second cry? A child comes to grief in some way, suffers some blow, and the elder sister or brother manages to quiet the child by appeals to its courage and fortitude; but soon after the crying is all over the mother enters the room, and the cry breaks out afresh. It is not because the pain has come back again, it is because there is the certainty of that kind of comfort which we mean by soothing. Now, beautiful as that was, the first was just as real, perhaps more real, comfort. Comfort and fortitude have the same root in common, and he who is strengthened is most really comforted. Soothing is not denied or left out of the reckoning, but it is not the chief thing.

¶ I was struck with the words of a psalm we were reading to-day—"Because thou, Lord, hast holpen me and comforted me." Help comes before comfort—help to bear up in the way of duty and not to murmur. We can seek this at once, and God will help us; but comfort must follow slowly, and our heart refuses it when it offers itself at once. Do not blame yourself if you do not feel it, and be satisfied if God gives you some measure of strength.[1]

¶ Professor Henry Drummond in an appreciation of the life and work of Professor W. G. Elmslie, who was one of his fellow-students at New College, Edinburgh, writes, "One of the last things I read of Elmslie saying was that what people needed most was comfort. Probably he never knew how much his mission, personally, was to give it. I presume he often preached it, but I think he must always have *been* it. For all who knew him will testify that to be in his presence was to leave care, and live where skies were blue."[2]

2. Now we must feel the need of comfort before we can listen to the words of comfort. And God knows that it is infinitely better and happier for us to need His comforts and receive them than ever it could be not to need them and so be without them. The consolations of God mean the substituting of far higher and

[1] *Letters of John Ker*, 339. [2] *Professor Elmslie*, 171.

better things than the things we lose to get them. The things we lose are earthly things, those He substitutes are heavenly. And who of us but would thankfully be "allured" by our God into any earthly wilderness, if only there we might find the unspeakable joys of union with Himself? St. Paul could say he "counted all things but loss" if he might but "win Christ"; and, if we have even the faintest glimpse of what winning Christ means, we will say so too.

¶ Everybody is signalling for comfort. There is that boy of yours; he is young, strong, daring, dashing, vivacious, vigorous. You say the boy can take care of himself, but the boy cannot. He is always signalling comfort alongside, sometimes when his parents least suspect it. Every ribbon or cup in the boy's room which speaks of some athletic conquest is comfort to his soul. Every time his eye rests upon it, if he is a Whitefield's boy, I fancy he says to himself, "No quest, no conquest." Even the things which mean defeat in your boy's athletic life are in themselves comforts to him if only he can know that he himself put out the last ounce of strength to win the anticipated and sought-for victory, and that the reason why he lost it was because in the world's arena of fair play there was a better man than himself who conquered. As he grows in years he takes comfort out of his success and out of his defeats when those defeats mean he has done his best and has been overmastered by superior technique or skill or strength.

Every mother knows how the dear little girl in the home is continually signalling for comfort and calling alongside those words of sympathy and those deeds of interest which mean everything to her in her advancing and developing life.

There, little girl, don't cry,
They have broken your doll, I know,
And your tea-set blue and your playhouse, too,
Are things of the long ago.
Heaven holds that for which you sigh:
There, little girl, don't cry.

There, little girl, don't cry,
They have broken your heart, I know,
And the rainbow gleams of your faithful dreams
Are things of the long ago.
But heaven holds that for which you sigh:
There, little girl, don't cry.[1]

[1] N. Boynton.

3. The words "all comfort" admit of no limitations and no deduction; and one would suppose that, however full of discomforts the outward life of the followers of such a God might be, their inward religious life must necessarily be always and in all circumstances a comfortable life. But, as a fact, it often seems as if exactly the opposite were the case and the religious lives of large numbers of the children of God were full, not of comfort, but of the utmost discomfort. This discomfort arises from anxiety as to their relations to God, and doubts as to His love. They torment themselves with the thought that they are too good-for-nothing to be worthy of His care, and they suspect Him of being indifferent to their trials, and of forsaking them in times of need. They are anxious and troubled about everything in their religious life, about their frames and feelings, their indifference to the Bible, their want of fervency in prayer, their coldness of heart. They are tormented with unavailing regrets over their past, and with devouring anxieties for their future. They feel unworthy to enter God's presence, and dare not believe that they belong to Him. They can be happy and comfortable with their earthly friends, but they cannot be happy or comfortable with God. And although He declares Himself to be the God of all comfort, they continually complain that they cannot find comfort anywhere; and their sorrowful looks and the doleful tones of their voice show that they are speaking the truth.

"Who comforteth us in all our affliction." Let us note the word in which the Apostle describes the condition of the wayfaring pilgrims. They are passing through "afflictions"; that is to say, they are in straits, in tight corners. Their way has become narrowed; they are hemmed in by cares or sorrows or temptations, and they are in a tight place. "He comforteth us" in such conditions.

¶ Frederic Myers gives a touching extract from his mother's diary, which indicates the extraordinary sympathy and comfort which he, then a child of eight, seems to have given her in her bereavement [the loss of her husband]. She said to him once that she could never be happy again, and the child replied, "You know God can do everything, and He might give us just once a vision of him as should make us happy all our lives after." Of course, a sensitive and clever child can, and often does, in the presence of overwhelming grief, suggest words and thoughts of

consolation of almost preternatural fineness and appositeness, purely by a precocity of intelligence—*ex ore infantium*—just as he can traffic with a coin whose battered heraldry he does not understand. But there does seem to be something more than that here—a loyal affection, a facing of great issues, a vitality of spirit, which cannot be passed over.[1]

(1) He comforts us in *physical weakness.*—In the breakage or decay of physical power He brings out spiritual richness and strength. This was something that St. Paul knew well. Only two chapters later in this same Epistle there comes the great verse where he describes it—"Though our outward man perish, yet the inward man is renewed day by day." It is something whose experience is repeated constantly on every side of us. It is hard for us to imagine how flat and shallow human life would be if there were taken out of it this constant element, the coming up of the spiritual where the physical has failed: and so, as the result of this, the impression, made even upon men who seem to trust most in the physical, that there is a spiritual life which lies deeper, on which their profoundest reliance must and may be placed. A man who has been in the full whirl of prosperous business fails in these hard-pressed days, and then for the first time he learns the joy of conscious integrity preserved through all temptations, and of daily trust in God for daily bread. A man who never knew an ache or pain comes to a break in health, from which he can look out into nothing but years of sickness; and then the soul within him, which has been so borne along in the torrent of bodily health that it has seemed almost like a mere part and consequence of the bodily condition, separates itself, claims its independence and supremacy, and stands strong in the midst of weakness, calm in the very centre of the turmoil and panic of the aching body.

¶ I do not know that there is anything more trying to a man of energy and activity and pride than to find himself crippled, and to see the whole world going by him. He once had the power of the senate, he once had power over the assembly, but now his voice is feeble, and his zeal is spent, and men are saying, "What a man he was," as if he were but a mere trembling, shivering shadow now. Although sometimes the decay of mental faculties takes off the acuteness of suffering, yet there are many

[1] A. C. Benson, *The Leaves of the Tree*, 165.

men who have pride that will not be alleviated, and who cannot bear to see the world going past them, and they not keeping step but standing still. Not to be able to do what they once could do —to many souls there is anguish in that; there is grace in it too, if they only know where to find it. Autumnal days are the most beautiful days of the year, and they ought to be the most beautiful days in a man's life. In October things do not grow any more, they ripen, they fulfil the destiny of the summer, and the thought of autumn is that it is going down, going forth. When all things in nature know and feel that death is coming near, do they sheet themselves in black as pagan Christians do? Do they turn everything to hideous mourning as pagan Christians do? They cry: "Bring forth our royal garments," and the oak puts on the habiliments of beauty, and all the herbs of the field turn to scarlet and yellow and every colour that is most precious; and the whole month of autumn goes tramping towards death, glowing and glorious.[1]

(2) He comforts in *sorrow*.—Sorrow is an indisputable fact of human experience. In many respects it is also an inexplicable fact; but there it is. We cannot account for it, but we all feel it. We may soar upon the wings of thought into the highest heaven, we may sink the plummet of inquiry into the depth, but we should not touch the bounds of this mystery. How did pain and grief ever enter into a universe ruled by a perfectly wise and loving God? Why, having entered, is it not by an act of the Omnipotent Will at once and for ever removed? How is it that its pangs are to all appearance so unevenly distributed, falling so heavily upon one, so lightly upon another; here harassing and cutting short a career of usefulness, there sparing a cumberer of the ground; here crushing the hopes of struggling virtue, and there leaving free and unrestrained the development of vice? These are questions which have agitated the minds of men ever since men began to think at all. And it might not be difficult to point out some considerations tending to lessen the perplexity, and to reconcile the mind to the existence and continuance of the physical evils referred to; it might be shown that, even so far as we can see, there is less real evil in their permission than there would be in their absolute compulsory removal. But when we come to deal with sorrow, not merely as a practical but as a personal fact, no general considerations suffice; speculation is power-

[1] H. W. Beecher.

less to assuage grief. We only know it is there, and either we must have it taken away or must be taught how to bear it; in other words, we feel the pain, and we long after either happiness or comfort. And of the two it is not happiness but comfort that God has appointed for us. "I pray not," said Christ of His disciples, "that thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that thou shouldest keep them from the evil"; and He began His Sermon on the Mount by declaring that the poor, the suffering, the mourning—all whom we call unhappy—are blessed, "for they shall be comforted."

¶ The one thing in sorrow which makes it sometimes almost unbearable is its apparent aimlessness. Why am I made to suffer thus? What have I done? Hush, impatient spirit! thou art in God's school of sorrow for a special purpose. Be careful to notice now how He comforts thee. Watch His methods. See how He wraps up the broken spirit, with touch so tender, and bandage so accurately adjusted. Remember each text which He suggests —put them down so as not to be forgotten: there will come a time in your life when you will be called on to comfort another afflicted as you are.[1]

(3) He comforts in *darkness*.—This does not by any means signify that God will remove all difficulties and fill every darkness with perfect light. God may do that. God does do that often for men. No one ever ought to believe that any religious difficulty he may have is hopeless and give it up in despair. He ought always to stand looking at every such difficulty, owning its darkness, but ready to see it brighten as the east brightens with the rising of the sun. Many of our religious doubts are like buildings which stand beside the road which we are travelling. When we first come in sight of them, we cannot understand them. They are all in confusion; they show no plan. We have come on them from the rear, from the wrong side. But, as we travel on, the road sweeps round them, and we come in front of them. Their design unwinds itself and we understand the beauty of wall and tower and window. So we come to many religious questions from the rear, from the wrong side. Let us keep on along the open road of righteousness. Some day we shall perhaps face them and see their orderly beauty.

¶ Why do I not go to God with my doubts? Perhaps I can

[1] F. B. Meyer, *Present Tenses*, 79.

find no certainty about religious things, and I hardly dare ask for certainty. It seems like haggling and arguing with God to tell Him of my doubts. Who am I that He should care to convince me and answer my questions? This is a bad mood, but it is common enough. But I can count my enlightenment as something greater than my own release from doubt; if I can see it as part of the process by which "the light which lighteth every man" is slowly spreading through the world, then it is no longer insignificant. I dare to hope for it. I dare to pray for it. I make myself ready for it. I cast aside frivolity and despair, the two benighteners of the human soul, and when God comes and over, under, nay, through every doubt proves Himself to me, I take Him with a certainty which is as humble as it is solemn and sure.[1]

## II.

### Whence Comfort Comes.

**"The God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies, and God of all comfort."**

1. Invariably when man confronts the problem of suffering he uses his doctrine of God to aid him in the solution. The history of human thought in all times and in all religions will, it is believed, be found to verify this statement. By a companion intuition to that which prompts man to ask why he suffers, man is prompted to feel that God is in some way related to his sufferings. This would be true in the case of an atheist, if there exists such a state of mind as pure atheism. The atheist, denying the existence of God, would thereby relate the conception of a God negatively to human suffering, saying: "There being no God, the God-idea has no bearing whatever on the sufferings of the human race." This would be true in the case of the agnostic, who declines to commit himself to a positive statement of belief on the subject of God. He would relate God tentatively to human trouble, saying: "He may send it, or He may not; in the absence of physical demonstration it is impossible to tell." This would be true in the case of the ethnic religions; for example, in the case of Zoroastrianism, the ancient Persian faith, with its dualism, —two co-eternal gods, arrayed against one another in ceaseless

[1] Phillips Brooks.

opposition touching man's condition. There is Ormuzd, the god of good, sending every blessing on the race; there is Ahriman, the god of evil, showering upon humanity woe, disappointment, and every form of ill. These illustrations might be indefinitely multiplied, and in each case we would discover the tendency of the human mind to place a doctrine of God in some relation, negative, tentative, or positive, to the problem of suffering. The reason for this is plain; the sufferings of the race are so tremendous, so unceasing, and in innumerable instances so out of proportion to any recognized standard of justice—there is a feeling too deep for analysis, too axiomatic to call for demonstration—that in some way, if there is a God, humanity's one hope of present consolation or of future relief must connect itself with Him, and be evolved through Him. Deep down below all creeds, the hope of a suffering world utters that many-sided, infinite syllable "God," and feeling the problem of suffering to be greater than man can handle alone, confesses, sometimes scarce knowing what it means: "To whom shall we go but unto thee!"

Destiny without God is a riddle: history without God is a tragedy. But if God be to you what He was to St. Paul—"the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies, and God of all comfort"—does not life assume a new complexion? If you believe—not accept theoretically but believe in your heart of hearts, grasp as the fundamental fact of existence for you—if you believe in a God whom you can describe with these words of St. Paul, what can you say but, thankfully, adoringly, "Blessed be God"? What does it matter what a man believes about God? the world says. Nothing else matters. All else by comparison is a thing of indifference.

¶ There is no real comfort in the Bible sense apart from faith. Time may mitigate or assuage or harden, the world may make us forget, life may distract, work may fill up the gap, friends may cheer and support, but only God can comfort. It is always so in the Bible. The Divine comfort is the only comfort worth speaking of. "Let thy merciful kindness be for my comfort," prayed the Psalmist. The unfailing source of comfort in both the Old and the New Testaments is the Divine presence. "Our Lord Jesus Christ himself, and God our Father which loved us and gave us eternal comfort and good hope through grace, comfort your hearts and stablish them in every good work and word," is Paul's

desire for the Thessalonians. "The God of all comfort" is His designation from whom alone can consolation come. It is only a man's faith that can cut deep down to the roots of his life. His life follows the fortunes of his faith. Our faith settles everything, even the quality of our possible comfort.[1]

2. Notice the names which St. Paul gives to God.

(1) He is "the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ." For always to the Apostle consolation abounds "through Christ." He is the Mediator through whom it comes. To partake in His sufferings is to be united to Him; and to be united to Him is to partake in His life. The Apostle anticipates here a thought on which he enlarges in the fourth chapter: "Always bearing about in the body the dying of Jesus, that the life also of Jesus may be manifested in our body." In our eagerness to emphasize the nearness and the sympathy of Jesus, it is to be feared that we do less than justice to the New Testament revelation of His glory. He does not suffer now. He is enthroned on high, far above all principality and power and might and dominion. The Spirit which brings His presence to our hearts is the Spirit of the Prince of Life; its function is not to be weak with our weakness, but to help our infirmity and to strengthen us with all might in the inner man. The Christ who dwells in us through His Spirit is not the Man of Sorrows, wearing the crown of thorns, but the King of kings and Lord of lords, who makes us partakers of His triumph. There is a weak tone in much of the religious literature which deals with suffering, utterly unlike that of the New Testament. It is a degradation of Christ to our level that it teaches, instead of an exaltation of man toward Christ's. But the last is the apostolic ideal: "More than conquerors through him that loved us." The comfort of which St. Paul makes so much here is not necessarily deliverance from suffering for Christ's sake, still less exemption from it; it is the strength and courage and immortal hope which rise up, even in the midst of suffering, in the heart in which the Lord of glory dwells. Through Him such comfort abounds; it wells up to match and more than match the rising tide of suffering.

¶ We cannot read the New Testament intelligently without being impressed that a new sense of power and a new source of

[1] Hugh Black, *Christ's Service of Love*, 52.

comfort came to men who had learned to know God through Jesus Christ. The contrast is most marked when we know the world into which the new message came, and this we can do to-day as never before. The epitaphs and papyri which are being discovered in such numbers in Egypt and elsewhere tell us of the customs of the common people, and show us the common point of view in the time of early Christianity before it had laid hold of the world. We see the mass of the people hungering for religion, and with nothing substantial to satisfy the hunger, and on that account open to all manner of superstition. We see them in their helplessness before the inevitable distress of death and before the great problem of life, usually either with a hopeless resignation or with a forced gaiety that is more pathetic still. One of these witnesses to a past life is suggestive as indicating the comfortless state of the world. In Yale University Library there has been deposited a Greek Papyrus of the second century, which is a letter of comfort sent over a bereavement. It reads thus: "Eirene to Taonnophris and Philon good cheer! I was as much grieved and shed as many tears over Eumoiros as I shed for Didymus, and I did everything that was fitting, and so did my whole family. But still there is nothing one can do in the face of such trouble. So I leave you to comfort yourselves. Goodbye." It is quite evidently not meant to be heartless, but there was not anything more to be said before the final passion of life. Paul's word is thrown into bold relief when he wrote to his converts "that ye sorrow not, even as the rest, which have no hope."[1]

(2) God is also "the Father of mercies." He is the Father of pity, of compassion, the Father of that gracious spirit to which we have given the name "Samaritanism." That is the kind of mercy which streams from the hills. Mercy is the very spirit of Samaritanism. It stops by the wounded wayfarer, it dismounts without condescension, it is not moved by the imperative of duty, but constrained by the tender yearnings of humanity and love. It is not the mercy of a stern and awful judge, but the compassion of a tenderly-disposed and wistful friend. Our God is the Father of such mercies. Wherever the spirit of a true Samaritanism is to be found, our God is the Father of it. It was born of Him. It was born on the hills.

It streams from the hills,
It descends to the plain.

[1] Hugh Black, *Comfort*, 10.

Wherever we discover a bit of real Samaritanism we may claim it as one of the tender offspring of the Spirit of God. With what boldness the Apostle plants his Lord's flag on territory that has been unjustly alienated from its owner, and claims it for its rightful King! "The Father of mercies."

(3) And he is the "God of all comfort." What music there is about the word! It means more than tenderness: it is strength in tenderness, and it is tenderness in strength. It is not a mere palliative but a curative. It not merely soothes, but heals. Its ministry is not only consolation but restoration. "Comfort" is "mercy" at work, it is Samaritanism busy with its oil and wine. And again let us mark that whenever we find this busy goodness among the children of men, exercising itself among the broken limbs and broken hearts of the race, the Lord is the fountain of it. He is the "God of all comfort," of every form and kind and aspect.

¶ I have always found, in talking to my people in private, that all second-hand talk out of books about the benefits of affliction was rain against a window-pane, blinding the view but never entering. But if I can make a poor wretch believe that God is the foe of all misery and affliction, that He yearns to raise us out of it, and to show us that in His presence is the fulness of all life and joy, and nothing but our own wilfulness and imperfection keeps us in it for an instant, that the moment he will allow God to remove those sorrows, the Lord will rejoice in doing so,—it is enough.[1]

Let me count my treasures,
All my soul holds dear,
Given me by dark spirits
Whom I used to fear.

Through long days of anguish,
And sad nights, did Pain
Forge my shield, Endurance,
Bright and free from stain!

Doubt, in misty caverns,
'Mid dark horrors sought,
Till my peerless jewel,
Faith to me she brought.

[1] Charles Kingsley.

Sorrow, that I wearied
  Should remain so long,
Wreathed my starry glory,
  The bright Crown of Song.

Strife, that racked my spirit
  Without hope or rest,
Left the blooming flower,
  Patience, on my breast.

Suffering, that I dreaded,
  Ignorant of her charms,
Laid the fair child, Pity,
  Smiling, in my arms.

So I count my treasures,
  Stored in days long past—
And I thank the givers,
  Whom I know at last![1]

## III.

### Why Comfort Comes.

**"That we may be able to comfort them that are in any affliction."**

1. God's dealing with a particular man is not an end in itself but is designed for a larger end for which the particular man is used. St. Paul saw this fully, and therefore his life has been the wonder of Christian history. The moral and spiritual ends involved in salvation can be secured only by the working of God's love through loving men. St. Paul blessed God for the personal comfort he had received in his affliction, but he saw beyond that to the great wide purpose in the heart of God. He saw himself to be not an end but an instrument. He blessed God not so much for the personal comfort as because through the personal comfort he was enabled to continue the work to which he had given his life. Most of us never see much beyond ourselves. We hedge ourselves in within our own borders. We desire the sunshine for ourselves and, it may be, bless God for every ray of it. But we do not always understand the object of God's love

[1] Adelaide Procter, *Legends and Lyrics*, i. 60.

and comfort, that for which He gives us it. We do not always see that we are blessed in order that we may bless, comforted that we may comfort, and get that we may give.

¶ No man has come to true greatness who has not felt in some degree that his life belongs to his race, and that what God gives him He gives him for mankind. It is the different degrees of this consciousness that make the different degrees of greatness in men. If you take your man full of acuteness, at the top of his speciality, of vast knowledge, of exhaustless skill, and ask yourselves where the mysterious lack is which keeps you from thinking that man great—why it is that, although he may be a great naturalist, or a great merchant, or a great inventor, he is not a great man—the answer will be here, that he is selfish; that what God gives him stops in himself; that he has no such essential humanity as to make his life a reservoir from which refreshment is distributed, or a point of radiation for God's light. And then if you take another man, rude, simple, untaught, in whom it is hard to find special attainments or striking points of character, but whom you instinctively call great, and ask yourself the reason of that instinct, I think you find it in the fact that that man has this quality: that his life does take all which it receives, not for its own use but in trust; that in the highest sense it is unselfish, so that by it God reaches man, and it is His greatness that you feel in it. For greatness after all, in spite of its name, appears to be not so much a certain size as a certain quality in human lives. It may be present in lives whose range is very small. There is greatness in a mother's life whose utter unselfishness fills her household with the life and love of God, transmitted through her consecration. There is greatness in a child's life who is patient under a wrong and shows the world at some new point the dignity of self-restraint and the beauty of conquered passions. And thence we rise until we come to Christ, and find the perfection of His human greatness in His transmissiveness; in the fact that what He was as man, He was not for Himself alone but for all men, for mankind. All through the range of human life, from lowest up to highest, any religious conception of human greatness must be ultimately reducible to this: a quality in any man by which he is capable first of taking into himself, and then of distributing through himself to others, some part of the life of God.[1]

¶ Dr. Wilson was a physician of souls, because he had, in a very high degree, what physicians call the *cor medicum*, and the

[1] Phillips Brooks.

*mens medica*—what one of the most famous of them explains as "that gentle womanliness of heart which the sick in depression and pain often desire, look for, and profit by." His warm sympathy gave his voice the tone which tells at a sick-bed, and also, when fitting, that sympathetic silence which is sometimes better than speech, and which made him an attentive listener to a tale of grief that relieved the over-burdened heart. "His sympathy," writes one, "was full of tact. He was able to touch the sore places of the heart without hurting the wound. One always felt at one's best when with him." To many he was an under-paraclete through whom the Paraclete fulfilled His Divine mission. For in the language of the New Testament, to console means to play the Paraclete.[1]

Ask God to give thee skill
In Comfort's art,
That thou may'st consecrated be
And set apart
Unto a life of sympathy.
For heavy is the weight of ill
In every heart;
And comforters are needed much
Of Christ-like touch.[2]

2. If we would be able to comfort we must ourselves be comforted. They are the expert comforters who have sought and found their comfort in the Lord. They are able to "speak a word in season to him that is weary." They who have been comforted in doubt are the finest ministers to those who are still treading the valley of gloom. They who have been comforted in sickness know just the word which opens the pearly gates and brings to the desolate soul the hosts of the Lord. They who have been comforted in turning from sin and wickedness know just the word to speak to the shrinking prodigal when he is timidly approaching his father's door. Let us get away to our God, let us bare our souls to Him, and let us receive His marvellous gifts of comfort and mercy. And then let us use our glorious wealth in enriching other people and by our ministry bringing them to the heights.

The most painfully tried, the most proved in suffering, the souls that are best acquainted with grief, provided their consola-

[1] J. Wells, *Life of James Hood Wilson*, 237. [2] A. E. Hamilton.

tion has abounded through Christ, are specially called to this ministry. Their experience is their preparation for it. Nature is something, and age is something; but far more than nature and age is that discipline of God to which they have been submitted, that initiation into the sufferings of Christ which has made them acquainted with His consolations also, and has taught them to know the Father of mercies and God of all comfort. Are they not among His best gifts to the Church, those whom He has qualified to console, by consoling them in the fire?

¶ This discipline (doubt as to his being saved) was part, I believe, of a merciful training, to teach him what he could learn effectually no otherwise. It is a discipline through which all who are to guide successfully perplexed consciences and timid Christians are made sooner or later to pass—"that they may be able to comfort them that are in any trouble with the comfort wherewith they themselves are comforted of God." Some have it at the outset of their Christian life, and so are long before they can venture to cherish the hope of salvation; others get so quietly into joy and peace in believing, that, as Dr. Kidd said to Mr. Duncan, "they cannot understand the difficulties of others." And some of these never do understand those difficulties. Living in sunshine themselves, they wonder that all other Christians are not as they are, and they die very much as they live—strangers to doubt and fear, but strangers also to much soul-humbling insight into the plagues of their own heart, and to that most entrancing of all Christian experiences, when, after deep, protracted, and apparently hopeless backsliding, they hear a voice saying unto them in melting accents, "I will heal their backsliding, I will love them freely, for mine anger is turned away from him," and they are constrained in return to say with Ephraim, "What have I to do any more with idols?" Mr. Duncan's first Christian experience was indeed very genuine—fresh and beauteous as a new-blown rose sparkling with dew-drops in the morning sun. But it was superficial. It needed deepening, solidifying, invigorating, both for his own sake and for that of others. This he got in a way which, though by no means peculiar, was in his case intensified to the utmost. Not but that there were in this second experience unsatisfactory elements, as I judge; but the real and permanent value of that experience was immense.[1]

¶ Livingstone, speaking of his friend, Dr. Philip, "Liberator of the Hottentots" [who, previous to going to South Africa, was a

[1] David Brown, *Memoir of John Duncan*, 210.

young Independent minister in Aberdeen], relates that Philip, when in Aberdeen, once visited an old woman in affliction. The youthful pastor began to talk very fair to her of the duty of resignation, trusting, hoping, and all the rest of it. The old woman after listening attentively looked up into his face, and said: "Puir thing, ye ken naething aboot it!"

¶ My daughter Eppie had an album in which she wrote appropriate mottoes under the various portraits; under Dr. John Brown's she wrote these lines from one of the elegies on Sir Philip Sidney:—

A sweet attractive kind of grace;
The full assurance given by looks;
Perpetual comfort in a face;
The lineaments of Gospel books.

What "perpetual comfort" I found in him as the years went on, bringing with them the inevitable cares and troubles, joys and sorrows, is known only to my own heart. Only one dreaded to draw too deeply on his sympathy, so real was the shadow cast on his sensitive spirit by the sorrows of others. Nor was it only his friends' sorrows that he shared; firmly and tenderly he could face their failures, their defeats, even their sin. To be worthy of Dr. Brown's friendship was an incentive, to more than he knew, to make the best of themselves.[1]

3. Just as with God, so also with us, comfort is not merely consolation. There are times when we come to God, as a child to its father, to be soothed and quieted, and it is His pleasure to soothe and quiet those who are in any affliction. But there are days when the most comforting thing God can do for us is to nerve us to duty. In both these ways we are to comfort each other. The recognition of the difference will have a very practical effect upon some of our dealings. We have come to believe a little too readily that the supreme way of using Christian sympathy and comfort is always in the attempt to alleviate circumstances. If we do otherwise we are supposed to be hard, inhuman, dictating to others a course which we are not prepared to follow ourselves. The only gospel to the poor and unfortunate, we are told, is the gospel of better wages, better homes, less work, more play. But there is more than that, and we simply rely on the evidence of fact when we say that in the circle of each one of

[1] Mrs. E. M. Sellar, *Recollections and Impressions*, 93.

us some of the noblest and strongest characters we have known have been the product of very hard and, as it seemed, cruel circumstances. Mark, the secret of it was not that there was produced in them a hard, stoical, passive endurance. That was not it at all; it was that they were strengthened to serve even under such conditions. They were taught by God that no man could sink so low that he could not contribute something to the common life. They have been helped by being taught that even they can help and comfort others.

¶ To the Christian soul many a time a personal sorrow, or disappointment, or loss has been a turning-point of life, an occasion for deeper consecration and wider service. In Morley's *Life of Cobden* there is a quotation from one of John Bright's speeches, which explains how he was led to devote his life first of all to the anti-Corn Law agitation and so to many noble causes. "At that time I was at Leamington, and I was, on the day when Mr. Cobden called on me, in the depths of grief, I might almost say of despair; for the light and sunshine of my house had been extinguished. All that was left on earth of my young wife, except the memory of a sainted life and of a too brief happiness, was lying still and cold in the chamber above us. Mr. Cobden called upon me as his friend, and addressed me, as you might suppose, with words of condolence. After a time he looked up and said, 'There are thousands of houses in England at this moment where wives, mothers, and children are dying of hunger. Now,' he said, 'when the first paroxysm of your grief is past, I would advise you to come with me, and we will never rest till the Corn Law is repealed.'" That was chastening yielding its noble fruit, sympathy born of sorrow. John Bright's rich, useful life might have been lost to England, if he had only brooded over his grief and hardened his heart, and refused to listen to the evident call which came to him.[1]

4. We scarcely need consider how we may comfort others. If we ourselves are comforted of God, the ways in which our comfort will pass to others are endless. Our very troubles have probably more influence than we suspect on the moral condition of those about us who care for us. We may often see this in a home where there is perhaps a sick child, or a sick mother; there is a tender-heartedness, a kindness, and patience towards the weak in that family, even including the boys, which are the direct result

[1] Hugh Black, *Comfort*, 136.

of the presence of suffering. The meaning of that mysterious suffering may be, in part, the development in others of features of character necessary to their well-being, and of maintaining in them that softness of heart so needful to spiritual receptivity. We who are strong little know how much we are indebted for what is best in us to some we love who have gone through suffering, in part, for our sakes. But if that is true of the family, may it not be true of a much wider circle? May not the sufferings of every sufferer under heaven be an instrumentality by which God develops the moral and spiritual character of his fellows? May not our suffering be a means of grace to many whom we do not know we touch? But it is not so much the suffering, it is the comforted suffering, by which we are made ministers of consolation, even when we say not a word. It is the suffering God has helped us to bear, the suffering He has cheered us in and sanctified to us, that is the highest good, and that in the way of illustrating what God and goodness are.

A father tries to teach his little son self-restraint, but it is a long task. One day that father's pride and indignation are touched to the quick, and the boy looks on and sees the inward conflict, and that a strong hand is laid on the rising anger, and the evil conquered. He has learnt the lesson; the father's sanctified suffering has taught what self-restraint is, when nothing else could. A mother tries in vain to make her child know what patience is. After a time she is in trouble, in which nothing is harder than to "stand still and see the salvation of God." But she does stand still, and in her trustful waiting she has taught what words could not. A teacher seeks in vain to make his scholars understand the worth of godliness; but in the way he endures the trials which God presently sends, he carries home the fact to their inmost heart. Sufferers little know how much they are doing for the Master and His world! For myself I have learnt many of my best lessons in sick rooms where they thanked me for going, as though they were the gainers, and not I. "Bearing about in the body"—says St. Paul—"the dying of Jesus, that the life also of Jesus may be manifested in our body. For we which live are alway delivered unto death for Jesus' sake, that the life also of Jesus may be manifested in our mortal flesh."

It was a sufferer's face, says one; men saw "as it had been the face of an angel."[1]

¶ There is one feature of Dr. Rainy's character in these years of which it is more easy to speak. That is the tenderness which more and more revealed itself in his words and acts as, indeed, on his very countenance. Many persons have spoken to me of this, and declared they can never forget his sympathy in times of sorrow, nor could they even tell of its sacredness. This was no new feature of Dr. Rainy's life; but in these later years, with a ripened Christian and human experience, and with the chastened sense that age must bring of the pathos of life, it seems more than ever to have been a deliberate part of his work to try to comfort and heal and sympathize. In these years his own family life was visited with a very sore sorrow. His third daughter, Annie, who was in many things his right hand, became ill and was sent with a friend to Algiers, where, soon after landing, she died on 9th March, 1903. She accepted with promptness and sweetness, when she realized it, the call to give up her young life, and her father in his sorrow wrote, "We have very great consolations—indeed every consolation we could have."[2]

¶ Soon after I became a minister, and while I was still a very young man, a great loss fell on a family in my congregation. The husband died a year or two after marriage. I went to see the widow. Her anguish was of that silent, self-restrained sort which it is always most terrible to witness. . . . Her grief was dumb. I was oppressed by it; I could say nothing. The sorrow seemed beyond the reach of comfort; and after sitting for a few minutes I rose in some agitation and went away without saying a word. After I had left the house, and when I had recovered self-possession, I felt humiliated and distressed that I had not spoken; I thought that perhaps it would have been better not to have gone at all. I do not feel so now. Sometimes the only consolation we can offer our friends is to let them know that we feel that their sorrow is too great for any consolation of ours.[3]

Do you long to bring relief
For the burden of a grief
  Even Hope has barely stirred?
You may compass this, perchance,
By the sunbeam of a glance,
  Through the music of a word.

[1] C. New, *Sermons*, 90.
[2] P. Carnegie Simpson, *The Life of Principal Rainy*, ii. 292.
[3] R. W. Dale, *The Laws of Christ in Common Life*, 133.

Is the casket of a heart
Double-locked, and set apart
With its treasure all untold?
Did you only understand,
In the hollow of your hand
Lies the master-key of gold.

Do you hesitate to seek
For the souls who never speak
Of their sorrow, nor their sin?
Hasten forth to them, and wait,
Standing humbly at their gate,
Till they beckon you within.[1]

[1] M. Bartleet, in *Sunday Magazine*, 1905, p. 792.

# The Yea and the Amen.

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## The Yea and the Amen.

**For how many soever be the promises of God, in him is the yea: wherefore also through him is the Amen, unto the glory of God through us.—2 Cor. i. 20.**

1. These words occur in a homely and curious connexion. St. Paul had not kept his appointment with the Corinthian Church, and he fears that the influence of a hostile party may cause his failure to be misunderstood. Did he use lightness? Was his pledge Yea, Yea, and Nay, Nay; Yes to-day, and No to-morrow? Now, what would seem most natural for us to say, if exposed to such a charge? Perhaps we should exclaim, "I am not such a man"; or, "They have mistaken the person they have to deal with"; or again, "I can afford to despise the insinuation." But St. Paul did not think first about himself. He had passed out of the sphere where any subject, even the slightest, appealed first and most naturally to his personal instincts and his self-respect. When he is reproached with changing lightly the plan of a tour (which plan he had actually changed), his thoughts revert to Christ and His Gospel, which such conduct would dishonour. What notion of the Master have these people, who charge him, the herald, with such unworthy levity? There was not Yea and Nay with Paul, because in Christ was one steadfast Yea.

Now, this argument is illogical unless we supply a suppressed premiss which St. Paul did not pause to state, since he had much to say in few words. For just as God's fidelity is no guarantee of Paul's veracity, unless Paul was a partaker of the Divine nature, so the steadfast sincerity of Christ is no guarantee of his sincerity, unless he and Christ are one—one in being, one in thought, will, aim. But this oneness with Christ was a fundamental conception of the Christian life with St. Paul. It lay at the basis of his theology. He could neither preach a sermon nor write a letter without affirming or assuming it. So completely was he one with

Christ that he affirms that he was crucified with Christ; that he died when Christ died, and rose again from the dead. All he did he did *by* Christ, as well as for Him. All he suffered was but a filling up of the remnant of Christ's affliction. His motto, his characteristic word, might well be: "Henceforth I live: yet not I, but Christ liveth in me." That being so, it was natural that he should assume this doctrine of the indwelling Christ here; and assume also that his readers would supply this premiss of his argument, which he did not think it necessary, or which it did not occur to him, to state. And, of course, the moment it *was* assumed, the Apostle's argument became sound, and even irresistible. For then it ran: The Son of God, Jesus Christ, is true; Christ is in me; the spring of all virtue, as well as the hope of glory: and therefore I am, I must be, true. As *He* was not Yea and Nay, *my* word to you is not, and cannot be, Yea and Nay.

2. Now look at the text. This is one of the many passages the force and beauty of which are, for the first time, brought within the reach of an English reader by the alterations in the Revised Version. These are dependent partly upon the reading of the Greek and partly upon the translation. As the words stand in the Authorized Version, "yea" and "amen" seem to be very nearly synonymous expressions, and to point substantially to the same thing, namely, that Jesus Christ is as it were the confirmation and seal of God's promises. But in the Revised Version the alterations, especially in the pronouns, indicate more distinctly that the Apostle means two different things by the "yea" and the "amen." The one is God's voice, the other is man's. The one has to do with the certainty of the Divine revelation, the other has to do with the certitude of our faith in the revelation. When God speaks in Christ, He confirms everything that He has said before, and when we listen to God speaking in Christ, our lips are, through Christ, opened to shout our assenting "Amen" to His great promises.

This is a truth so far-reaching that all the promises of God have the seal of their stability in Christ. As often as any pledge is realized (and that is whenever one is trusted), the conscience of the Church confesses that her enjoyment of it has been attained in Him. Through Him, therefore, she returns her glad attesta-

tion. How many soever are the promises of God, in Him is the Yea of Divine fulfilment; wherefore through Him is also the Amen of human acknowledgment and praise, "to the glory of God through us."

3. Taken thus, the text not only gives us a new conception of the mission of Christ, it gives us also a new conception of the vocation of the Church, of *our* vocation as Christian men. Christ is the Yea of God: we, through the power of the indwelling Christ, are the Amen. It is His mission to translate all the thoughts of God into actual and vital forms; it is our vocation, as we study that translation, as we see those thoughts taking shape, as they become visible and recognizable to us, to add our Amen to them, *i.e.* to accept, welcome, and conform to them. The power to add this Amen, to consent to and obey the will of God, we derive from Christ, who lives, and dwells in us. And this power is given to us with a view "to the glory of God through us." In fine, the vision which lies behind St. Paul's words, and which he labours to express, seems to be nothing less than this: He conceives of the infinite God as dwelling in the inaccessible light, and thinking out the thoughts of His eternal righteousness and love; He conceives of Jesus Christ, the Son of God, as translating these thoughts into creative, providential, and redeeming acts; and he conceives of the vast congregation of those who love God and believe on His Son as standing round and contemplating the Divine thoughts which take visible form at the behest of the Son, and chanting their loud Amen to all that He does, to all that He reveals of the Father's will.

## I.

### Christ's Yea.

**"In him is the yea."**

There are two ways in which we may think of Christ as *Yea*. First He is Himself certain, and next the promises are certain in Him.

1. *Christ Himself is certain.*—Nothing is more noteworthy,

when our attention is drawn to it, than the confidence of the assertions of Christ, so vast and far-reaching in their scope, so unqualified by any "perhaps," by any hint of uncertainty or conjecture.

(1) This is so with regard to His own earthly life. Strange indeed is the contrast between the words of His Apostle, "I go bound in the spirit unto Jerusalem, not knowing the things that shall befall me there," and the explicit and detailed warnings given by Jesus of the manner, the circumstances, and the date of His death. "Not on the feast-day," said the priests; but the knowledge of their Victim outran their most subtle calculations. "After two days the passover cometh, and the Son of man is delivered up to be crucified."

(2) Again, we all feel the pressure and solemnity of the problems of human existence. Revelation is perfect as a practical guide, but a solver of theoretical problems it is not. What am I? Whither am I going? He may be a good Christian, but assuredly he is a dull thinker, who supposes that every cloud is lifted by religion from the twin problems of our origin and our destiny. Dimly these questions loom up, like gigantic mountain slopes visible through rolling vapours, before us and behind. Through changing mists we see them, half illumined in the radiance of our Christian trust, but their head and their base alike are swathed in impenetrable mystery.

In this baffled peering wonder Jesus had no share. He alone of human beings could say, without reserve, "I know whence I come, and whither I go." And yet the mystery of His being was the most profound of all.

(3) The same tone of unwavering certitude is audible in His teaching about duty and God. Others have taught with a wonderful confidence, but it has always been avowedly a derived and imparted message. Gabriel spoke to Muhammad. The spot is shown where Gautama, after agonies of search, became Buddha, which means, "the enlightened one." Even the prophets of the true faith were men "to whom the word of the Lord came," a position which Christ contrasted with His own. But if men had known Him they should have known the Father. "The Father sheweth him all things that himself doeth." "No man knoweth the Son, but the Father; neither knoweth any

the Father, save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal him."

(4) In quite the same confident tones Jesus spoke of the life to come; "In my Father's house are many mansions; I go to prepare a place for you"; "Father, I will that they also, whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am."

Review the whole circle of spiritual truth, and see whether there is any part of it where Jesus trod with hesitating step. Find one conjecture, one mere inference, one example of truth arrived at otherwise than as a fact within His own consciousness. He used Scripture to repel Satan, to refute gainsayers, to convince the hesitating; and, as in His last words upon the cross, to express the deepest emotions of His own heart. But His natural and characteristic method, with all teachable souls, is as He expressed it to Nicodemus: "We speak that we do know, and testify that we have seen."

This certainty of Christ's is part of the completeness of His character and life. And hence it becomes part of that assurance we have when we put our trust in Him.

¶ The character and doctrine of Jesus are the sun that holds all the minor orbs of revelation to their places, and pours a sovereign self-evidencing light into all religious knowledge. It is no ingenious fetches of argument that we want; no external testimony, gathered here and there from the records of past ages, suffices to end our doubts; but it is the new sense opened in us by Jesus Himself—a sense deeper than words and more immediate than inference—of the miraculous grandeur of His life; a glorious agreement felt between His works and His person, such that His miracles themselves are proved to us in our feeling, believed in by that inward testimony. On this inward testimony we are willing to stake everything, even the life that now is, and that which is to come. If the miracles, if revelation itself, cannot stand upon the superhuman character of Jesus, then let it fall. If that character does not contain all truth and centralize all truth in itself, then let there be no truth.[1]

Let me forget all else that I have known—
All else that I have heard;
Let me remember Thee, and Thee alone,
O Jesus—living Word!

[1] Horace Bushnell, *Nature and the Supernatural.*

It is enough to know that I am Thine—
That Thou dost undertake
To hold and keep this helpless life of mine—
Accepted for Thy sake.

O, Thou alone canst hope or help afford;
There is no way beside.
I look to Thee, my glorious risen Lord,
And I am satisfied.[1]

2. *The promises of God are certain in Christ.*—This is the special assertion of St. Paul in the text. And these promises, we may say at once, have their certainty of fulfilment in Christ because He has fulfilled the conditions on which they are suspended. "The wages of sin is death." "Without shedding of blood is no remission." So say the Scriptures; so says the conscience of man in a hundred lands. The promises of pardon for sin are many and rich; but they are all based on the fact that Christ voluntarily took our place under the Law and paid the penalty our disobedience incurred. Behind the promises are the cross and the real sacrifice it bore. That that sacrifice of Himself was accepted of God in our behalf is put beyond denial by His resurrection from the dead. Anyone can write a promise of pardon; many wise men have taught moral truth; and some good men have died in pity and in love for their fellow-men. There were three crosses on Calvary that day. Why do we lean with all religious hope on the central cross? Because Christ in His teaching, in His works of mercy, in giving Himself to die for us, based the acceptance by God of what He did in our behalf on His resurrection on the third day. Other men were wise; loved their fellow-men with a passion of love and died for them; but of such only Christ was raised from the dead at the time foretold. The opening of the grave and the raising of the dead is the sole prerogative of God. That resurrection is God's endorsement and acceptance of Christ's sacrifice as atonement for man's sin. The promises of the needed grace for the passing day are based on the fact that after His resurrection Christ ascended into heaven and is there making continual intercession for us. These promises put us in touch with a living Saviour. The promises of future

[1] Edith H. Divall, *A Believer's Rest*, 30.

glory on which we depend are based on the fact that Christ has entered into that glory and is there now preparing a place for us, to return again to take us to Himself, that where He is we may be also. There, then, is the security behind these promises—the person and the work of Christ, His life, His death, His resurrection, and His ascension, by virtue of which the promises are Yea.

(1) The promise of the *love* of God is secured in Christ. All too often we forget the riches of this truth; we lose sight of the Father's love. Perhaps in sincere anxiety not to forget that Christ is God, we think it a dim and distant truth when we hear that the Father Almighty loved, and loves, His Son and the sinner and the world. But here again the Bible tells a different story. It shows us the love of God the Father as the very source of our salvation in Christ Jesus. "This is my beloved Son; hear ye him"; "He spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all"; "the Father himself loveth you, because ye have loved me"; "through him we have access unto the Father"; "the Father, according to his abundant mercy, hath begotten us again unto a lively hope." To know the Father—through our Lord Jesus Christ, never apart from Him, but through and in Him,—is the glorious privilege of those who have life through grace. "This is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent."

The question may arise in some minds, Is there any need for proving God's love? The question never arose except within the limits of Christianity. It is only men who have lived all their lives in an atmosphere saturated by Christian sentiment and conviction that ever come to the point of saying, "We do not want historical revelation to prove to us the fact of a loving God." They would never have fancied that they did not need the revelation unless, unconsciously to themselves, and indirectly, all their thoughts had been coloured and illuminated by the revelation that they professed to reject. God as Love is "our dearest faith, our ghastliest doubt," and the only way to make absolutely certain of the fact that His heart is full of mercy to us is to look upon Him as He stands revealed to us, not merely in the words of Christ—for, precious as they are, these are the smallest part of His revelation—but in the life and in the death, which open for us the heart of God. Remember what He said Himself—*not* "He that hath

listened to me doth understand the Father," but "He that hath *seen* me hath seen the Father." "In him is the yea." And the hopes and shadowy fore-revelations of the loving heart of God are confirmed by the fact of His life and death. "God *establisheth* (not "commendeth," as our translation has it,) his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us."

> At Derby Haven in the sweet Manx land
> A little girl had written on the sand
> This legend—"God is love." But, when I said—
> "What means this writing?" thus she answered—
> "It's father that's at 'say,'
> And I come here to pray,
> And . . . God is love." My eyes grew dim—
> Blest child! in Heaven above
> Your angel sees the face of Him
> Whose name is love.[1]

(2) The *providence* of God becomes a fact in Christ. We find within us an instinct which impels us to cry for some heavenly help or guidance or support in times of crisis and distress. Even the most sceptical will often give a practical denial to their doubts by the word of prayer which is wrung from their hearts under stress of some calamity, or under the shadow of an impending danger. In our heart of hearts, that is to say, we feel that God personally cares and provides for this world which He has made; deep down in our being we believe that to pray is to touch the heart of the Eternal; and in moments of anguish or of supreme joy we confide in an unseen Providence as we would in our closest friend. And then comes the cold analysis of reason, and—

> Doubts will rise if God hath kept
> His promises to men.

What does it all amount to? we say. Instinct?—a delusion Providence?—a fiction of the imagination. Think of it. What do I, as an individual, count for in a world so vast, itself but a speck in an illimitable universe? How should God—if there be a God—have any personal care for me? It is the old question of the Psalmist: "What is man, that thou art mindful of him? and the Son of man, that thou visitest him?"

[1] T. E. Brown, *Old John and Other Poems*, 190.

The most casual glance at the life and character of Jesus will give us the answer. He saw the providence of God in the wayside flower, in the feeding of the birds, in the fall of a sparrow; "the very hairs of your head are all numbered"; He who clothes the grass of the field will much more provide for the needs of the children of men. Because He was thus conscious of God in the things about Him, Jesus was calm and free from care in the midst of an angry and a striving world. In the march of events and the sure progress of the ages, He recognized the all-controlling will of God, and so He lived and died that the Father's will might be accomplished. And then at the end, with a joy which all the cruelties of men could not suppress, He yielded Himself to the loving Providence which sent Him forth. "Father," He said, "into thy hands I commend my spirit."

¶ "I cannot see, I cannot speak, I cannot hear, God bless you," was Newman's message to his old friend Mr. Gladstone in November, 1888. Newman's delight in men, in books, and in affairs had all his life been intense, and he had a strong desire that his life might be prolonged to its utmost possible span, if it was the will of God. "For myself, now, at the end of a long life," he wrote, "I say from a full heart that God has never failed me, has never disappointed me, has ever turned evil into good for me. When I was young I used to say (and I trust it was not presumptuous to say it) that our Lord ever answered my prayers."[1]

(3) *Pardon* is made sure in Christ. Every man of deep heart-experience has felt the necessity of having a clear certainty and knowledge about forgiveness. Men do not feel it always. A man can skate over the surface of the great deeps that lie beneath the most frivolous life, and may suppose, in his superficial way of looking at things, that there is no need for any definite teaching about sin, and the mode of dealing with it. But once bring that man face to face, in a quiet hour, with the facts of his life and of a Divine law, and all that superficial ignoring of evil in Himself, and of the dread of punishment and consequences, passes away. Then the only message that answers to the needs of an awakened conscience and an alarmed heart is the old-fashioned message that Jesus Christ the Righteous has died for us sinful men. All other religions have felt after a clear doctrine of forgiveness, and all have failed to find it. Here is the Divine "Yea!" And on it

[1] Alexander Whyte, *Newman: An Appreciation*, 61.

alone we can suspend the whole weight of our soul's salvation. The rope that is to haul us out of the horrible pit and the miry clay had much need to be tested before we commit ourselves to it. There are many easy-going superficial theories about forgiveness predominant in the world to-day. Except the one that says, "In whom we have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sin," they are all like the rope let down into the dark mine to lift the captives beneath, half of the strands of which have been cut on the sharp edge above, and when the weight hangs to it, it will snap. There is nothing on which a man who has once learned the tragic meaning and awful reality and depth of the fact of transgression can suspend his forgiveness, except this, that "Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God." In Him the promise is Yea.

¶ All human religions are founded on the principle that man must do something, or feel something, or believe something, in order to make God love him and forgive him; whereas God's religion just contains a declaration that nothing of the kind is necessary on our part in order to make God forgive us, for that He hath *déjà*, already, loved us and forgiven us, and given us His Son, and in Him all things. He hath declared this to the whole race without any exception, as a truth to each individual; so that the difference between the most miserable hater of God and the happiest child of God does not consist in this, that God loves the one and does not love the other; but in this, that the one knows God's love to himself and the other does not. It is the same difference as there is between two men standing with their faces to the sun, the one with his eyes shut and the other with his eyes open.[1]

(4) The promise of *holiness* is ours in Christ. Here the promise, in many a varying form, is magnificently full. "These things write I unto you that ye sin not"; "Whosoever abideth in him sinneth not"; "Let not sin reign in your mortal body"; "As he which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation." How can all this possibly be? It is impossible except in Him. The secret is not it, but He. "Christ is made unto us sanctification"; "Ye are filled full in him"; "that Christ may dwell in your hearts, by faith"; that ye may "know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge."

[1] *Letters of Thomas Erskine of Linlathen*, i. 161.

¶ It is a magnificent truth that having come to Christ you are not merely near Him, but in Him; and in Him you have at once nothing short of Christ and all His treasures. But do not make a false use of the glorious fact. Remember that you may "have and not have." You may receive a property and not enjoy it. You may inherit wealth and not use it. To grasp the great promises of what God can do for you, as well as the mighty encouragement of what He has done for you, is the way to "possess the possessions" and to realize the wealth. You have long rested, my friend in Christ, on the facts, the certainties, of His finished work. But have you made use enough of His never finished working? Our Christ is eternally fixed and unchanging, in His atoning merit. But He, the same Christ, is prepared immortally to *grow* in us, in His blessed indwelling by the Holy Spirit. Yes, the "exceeding precious promises" point us to Christ dwelling in the heart by faith, to Christ our very life, to Christ in whom we are already "enriched in everything." Go on and use your riches, full of hope. For while your discouragements are all behind you, the great and precious promises are all in front. "Forget the things that are behind," and step forth forward upon "the things that are before"; not upon your resolves, experiences, achievements, but on the Lord in His "precious promises." Relying upon His promises you enter into the liberty that belongs to the children of God.[1]

A morning-glory bud, entangled fast
Amid the meshes of its winding stem,
Strove vainly with the coils about it cast,
Until the gardener came and loosened them.

A suffering human life entangled lay
Among the tightening coils of its own past;
The Gardener came, the fetters fell away,
The life unfolded to the sun at last.[2]

(5) And the promise of the *future* is made sure in Him. Apart from Him the future is cloud and darkness, for a verbal revelation is not enough. We have enough of arguments; what we want is facts. We have enough of man's peradventures about a future life, enough of evidence more or less valid to show that it is "probable," or "not inconceivable," or "more likely than not," and so on and so on. What we want is that somebody shall

[1] H. C. G. Moule, *All in Christ*, 40. [2] Willis Boyd Allen.

cross the gulf and come back again. And so we get in the Resurrection of Christ the one fact on which men may safely rest their convictions of immortality.

¶ Death was above all to such as St. Paul a meeting with Jesus Christ, who was the object of his ceaseless faith, the hope of his longing heart. This man did not speculate about heaven—where it was, what it was. Nor did he imagine its glory as became a mystic like St. John. For him heaven was another name for Christ, the sum of all goodness, the revelation of all perfection. Between him and Christ there had been a long friendship, with many love-passages, which had grown more intimate every year, but had never been completed. St. Paul had heard Christ's voice on the road to Damascus; he had seen Him in visions; for brief moments he had visited the third heavens; but face to face this great Christian may not have seen his Master as had St. Peter and St. John. For an unseen Lord he lived, laboured, suffered as none else has ever done. What wonder that St. Paul hungered and thirsted for the day when that dark servitor death would usher him into the unveiled Presence.

> That one Face, far from vanish, rather grows,
> Or decomposes but to recompose,
> Becomes my universe that feels and knows.[1]

3. *All* the promises of God, says the Apostle. He thinks of the sum-total of human blessedness, "all the promises of God." Man has forfeited them; the conditions have not been kept; and yet the gift has been bestowed. Not even our unworthiness, so often proved, has frustrated the steadfast purpose of the grace of God. This also, this greatest example in the universe of an unshaken purpose, has come to us through Christ. He is, for humanity, the embodiment of the faithfulness of God. And in Him they are all certified, for He who delivered Him up, how shall He not freely give us all things? In Him is the Yea.

¶ I remember an aged minister used to say, that the most learned and knowing Christians, when they come to die, have only the same plain promises for their support as the common and unlearned; and so I find it in my old age. It is the plain promises of the gospel that are my support; and I bless God they *are* plain promises, which do not require much labour and pains to under-

[1] J. Watson, *The Potter's Wheel*, 161.

stand them; for I can do nothing now but look into my Bible for some promise to support me, and live upon that.[1]

¶ As I was coming to you to-day, my path led me by a tasteful enclosure, into which I was bold enough to enter. It was a vinery, not like those of the open field, so common in Palestine, France and Germany, but a spacious and elegant conservatory. A succession of thriving stems, twisted in form, but vigorously climbing the glass wall of the structure, at once met my eye. The long arms of the plants, with their delicate tendrils, were carefully trained along the under side of the crystal roof. The branches were covered with fresh green leaves, through whose fine tissues the sunlight agreeably passed. But what delighted me most was the rare assortment of green and purple clusters that hung above me, like inverted cones or pyramids, from amid the foliage. Their luscious beauty quite arrested me. As I stood admiring, the proprietor of the conservatory, with whom I had the happiness of being a little acquainted, came in. Observing my looks he kindly asked me if I would have a cluster, and at once he proceeded to cut down a bunch for me. The grapes were very sweet. Then, noticing that I still continued my gaze, he said, "Perhaps you would wish to take a few clusters home with you?" To this I replied, that I was at the time on my way to a company of friends, whose lips were no doubt as parched as my own had been, and that I was sure there were some among them who would be as much delighted with a cluster as myself. On which he stepped aside, and, having brought out a commodious and suitable basket, he inlaid it with vine leaves. He then cut down some of the finer clusters, and, placing these carefully on the leaves, he took the basket aside, and while his back was towards me, shut down the cover, so as to secure the delicious but fragile contents from injury. Coming forward with a pleasant smile, he handed me the basket saying, "Take this; it contains a few bunches. Share them among your friends, and give a cluster to any one whom you find prepared to receive it." And here I am, with the basket in my hand! Let me set it down and raise the cover, so neatly fastened, and, before proceeding further, hand some of the clusters to you on this thirsty afternoon. Be assured, it will afford me as much pleasure to distribute them as it will give you to receive them. Such is my parable, for parable it is—perhaps to the disappointment of some of the younger of my auditory. The beautiful clusters I have spoken of represent the Promises of God, those exceeding great and precious promises, in which the blessings of the everlasting covenant are stored up, and

[1] J. Watts.

by which we are said to become "partakers of the divine nature." Now let me open the basket, and take out one of its delicate specimens. Ah, here is a beauty! We must handle it softly. See how symmetrical in shape, how perfect in form, is each grape! The fruit seems as if it would melt on the lips. What are the terms of this promise? Listen!

"Fear thou not; for I am with thee:
Be not dismayed; for I am thy God:
I will strengthen thee;
Yea, I will help thee;
Yea, I will uphold thee with the right hand of my righteousness."[1]

(1) No doubt, when the Apostle, a Hebrew of the Hebrews, spoke of the promises of God, the first thought that would arise in his mind would be the promises to the people of Israel: the promises of dominion and supremacy; the brilliant pictures of the Prophets; the glories foreshadowed in the lives of David and Solomon; the majesty and excellence implied in the very fact that they were the people of God's choice. And if this thought passed, as of course it must have passed, beyond the limits of Israel after the flesh, still the promises would be the same, only in a spiritual form: the glory of the new Israel, the new Jerusalem, the new Law, the new Covenant; promises made under a figure but holding good in their essence even when the figure exists no longer.

(2) Such, perhaps, would hardly be the first thought suggested to one of us by the promises of God; and, indeed, would not be the last or the crowning thought in the mind of the Apostle of the Gentiles. Far deeper and older than these are the promises which God has written with His own finger, not on tables of stone, but on the fleshy tables of the heart of man. These promises, the earliest of all God's revelations, made to mankind before even the oldest book in the Bible was written; these promises which the loving heart finds repeated in every page of the Bible; these promises which the Bible often reveals to us in so strange a way, making us quite unable to tell whether the word within or the word without, whether the yearnings of conscience or the oracles of the Scripture, first pronounced them in our

[1] A. N. Somerville, *Precious Seed*, 233.

spiritual ears; these are above all the promises which Christ came to ratify and fulfil. Deep down in the heart of man there speaks a voice which calls us to God, and promises to take us to Him. And in former days, no doubt, when it spoke to those who had no revelation to interpret or confirm its sayings, what it said must have been often strange, inarticulate, even unintelligible. In dumb instincts rather than in plain commands, in voiceless longings, in yearnings for something unearthly, in strange doubts and questions did it often speak to men who had no other teaching. And even now, to those who have the Bible in their hands, but are still unawakened, or only half awakened, the voices that call from the deep abysses of the soul are faint and strange, and hard to understand, and often seem hopelessly impossible to obey. The Bible is, as it were, the grammar and the dictionary of this spiritual language, and teaches us to interpret its accents into duties and prayers and hopes and battle and assurance of victory. But even when we have the Bible, how much study we need before we can fathom the depths of spiritual meaning contained in the everlasting promises which God's finger has written on the soul of man. Men still unawakened, or only half awakened, could not, even with the Bible in their hands, always translate the language of the spirit that speaks within them. But even the awakened, in our human sense of the word awakened, what can they do but see in a glass darkly the dim reflection of the truth of God? Yet what they see is the never-dying truth, and that truth received its final seal in the life of Christ.

¶ This, Edwin Markham, the spiritually-minded, has put for us in his rhapsody on "The Desire of All Nations," where he sees that in Christ is the one positive figure that fulfils the highest prophecies and sublimest promises that were cherished in the hearts of the world's great nations from the most ancient days; for in Him God had answered Yea to all the desires of the people of the whole world.

> And when He comes into the world gone wrong,
> He will rebuild her beauty with a song.
> To *every* heart He will its own dream be:
> One moon has many phantoms in the sea.
> Out of the North the horns will cry to men:
> "Balder the Beautiful has come again!"

The flutes of Greece will whisper from the dead:
"Apollo has unveiled his sunbright head!"
The stones of Thebes and Memphis will find voice:
"Osiris comes; O tribes of Time rejoice!"
And social architects who build the State,
Serving the dream at citadel and gate,
Will hail Him coming through the labour hum.
And glad quick cries will go from man to man:
Lo, He has come, our Christ the Artisan—
The King who loved the lilies, He has come!

¶ Lord, the Apostle dissuadeth the Hebrews from covetousness, with this argument, because God said, I will not leave thee nor forsake thee. Yet I find not that God ever gave this promise to all the Jews, but he spake it only to Joshua when first made commander against the Canaanites; which, without violence to the analogy of faith, the Apostle applied to all good men in general. Is it so that we are heirs apparent to all promises made to thy servants in Scripture? Are the charters of grace granted to them good to me? Then will I say with Jacob, I have enough. But because I cannot entitle myself to thy promises to them, except I imitate their piety to thee; grant I may take as much care in following the one, as comfort in the other.[1]

## II.

### Our Amen.

**"Through him is the Amen."**

Therefore, through Him is the great Amen of the Universal Church, attesting and acclaiming His fidelity by psalms and anthems, by every act of living faith, by the labours of time, by the triumphs of countless death-beds, where death has been without a sting, and by the songs of those within the veil.

1. Now there should be some kind of correspondence between the firmness with which we grasp, the tenacity with which we hold, the assurance with which we believe, these great truths, and the rocklike firmness and immovableness of the evidence upon which they rest. It is a poor compliment to God to come to His most veracious affirmations, sealed with the broad seal of His Son's

[1] Thomas Fuller, *Good Thoughts in Bad Times.*

life and death, and to answer with a hesitating "Amen," that falters and almost sticks in our throat. Build rock upon rock. Be certain of the certain things. Grasp with a firm hand the firm stay. Immovably cling to the immovable foundation; and though you be but like the limpet on the rock hold fast by the Rock, as the limpet does; for it is an insult to the certainty of the revelation, where there is hesitation in the believer.

¶ The sensitive paper, which records the hours of sunshine in a day, has great gaps upon its line of light answering to the times when clouds have obscured the sun; and the communication of blessings from God is intermittent, if there be intermittency of faith.[1]

> In happy ease I cried: "O sweetest Dusk
> That ever pressed a kiss on weary eyes!
> Bless now mine ears with murmur of thy name
> And noble origin." Then answered he:
> "My father's name was Night; from the embrace
> Of Life and Death he sprang, and wed with Rest;
> I am their offspring Promise, and whene'er
> I meet with Faith, then is Fulfilment born."[2]

2. Our Amen is through Him. He is the Door. The truths which He confirms are so inextricably intertwined with Himself that we cannot get them and put away Him. Christ's relation to Christ's gospel is not the relation of other teachers to their words. We may accept the words of a Plato, whatever we think of the Plato who spoke the words. But we cannot separate Christ and His teaching in that fashion, and we must have *Him* if you are to get *it*. So faith in Him, the intellectual acceptance of Him, as the authoritative and infallible Revealer, the bowing down of heart and will to Him as our Commander and our Lord, the absolute trust in Him as the foundation of all our hope and the source of all our blessedness—that is the way to certitude. And there is no other road that we can take.

¶ Not long ago, in Further India, an aged Christian convert, a man of eighty years, a surviving disciple of Adoniram Judson, was found dying, by a missionary visitor. His once strong mind was shaken by age and weakness; his thoughts failed and

[1] A. Maclaren, *The Wearied Christ.*
[2] A. Bunston, *The Porch of Paradise*, 12.

wandered; but when they were pointed to Christ, they settled and were clear again. When asked about his own faith in his Redeemer, his answer was strong in its simplicity: "*I have hold of Him with both my hands.*"[1]

3. If we thus keep near Him our faith will bring us the present experience and fulfilment of the promises, and we shall be sure of them, because we have them already. And whilst men are asking, "Do we know anything about God? Is there a God at all? Is there such a thing as forgiveness? Can anybody find anywhere absolute rules for his life? Is there anything beyond the grave but mist and darkness?" we can say, "One thing I know, Jesus Christ is my Saviour, and in Him I know God, and pardon and duty and sanctifying and safety and immortality; and whatever is dark, this, at least, is sun-clear. Get high enough up and you will be above the fog; and while the men down in it are squabbling as to whether there is anything outside the mist, you, from your sunny station, will see the far-off coasts, and haply catch some whiff of perfume from their shore, and see some glinting of a glory upon the shining turrets of "the city that hath foundations."

¶ Bunyan's stepping-stones are Scripture promises. There are other stepping-stones. Tennyson speaks of making "stepping-stones of our dead selves to higher things," and many a man, learning self-respect through failure, has blessed God for these. Again, there are yet other stepping-stones. There is a certain valley in the North where a rude path, hardly distinguishable at the best of times, leads through dangerous moss-hags, right across the centre of a morass. In rainy weather the track would be wholly obliterated but for the little foot-prints of a band of children who go to school that way. Many a traveller has found his path safely through the Slough of Despond by following in the children's footsteps. But after all there are no such stepping-stones as God's promises. A white boulder is a poor enough object until you see it shining in a morass; then it means life and safety. So the promises of God, that have often seemed but wayside facts of no particular interest, shine suddenly with the very light of salvation when we see them in the Slough of Despond.[2]

[1] H. C. G. Moule, *Christ is All*, 106.
[2] John Kelman, *The Road*, i. 21.

# The Triumph of the Vanquished.

## Literature.


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## The Triumph of the Vanquished.

**But thanks be unto God, which always leadeth us in triumph in Christ, and maketh manifest through us the savour of his knowledge in every place. For we are a sweet savour of Christ unto God, in them that are being saved, and in them that are perishing; to the one a savour from death unto death; to the other a savour from life unto life.—2 Cor. ii. 14–16.**

1. The text in its immediate connexion presents a striking instance of a peculiarity in St. Paul's style of writing. He often drops the subject in hand and goes off, at the suggestion of a word, into a digression which has little apparent relation to it. In the thirteenth verse of this chapter he says that he left Troas in deep distress at not having met Titus there, and came into Macedonia. But, notwithstanding his sorrow, at the mention of Macedonia he startles us by an outbreak of thanksgiving, "But thanks be unto God, etc." He does not explain this outburst of thankfulness, and tell us why he thus breaks forth. But we happen to know why. In Macedonia he received Titus, whom he expected at Troas, with news from Corinth, which he had anticipated with dread, but which, as it turned out, instead of confirming his fears, filled him with joy. He feared the Corinthians might have resented the faithfulness of his dealing with them in his former letter, and been hardened by it, instead of being made penitent, but Titus brings him news of their repentance and reformation, and he is overwhelmed with joy. He finds he has achieved a triumph when he half dreaded a defeat, and he cannot help expatiating upon it at the mention of the name of the place where Titus met him. And in doing so he generalizes the thought to the expression of this truth—that the exercise of sincerity and faithfulness on the part of a Christian minister, in "speaking the truth in love," is always a triumph in the sight of God, whatever may be its effect upon the persons addressed. He therefore enlarges the sphere of his joy, and thanks God, "which *always*

leadeth us in triumph in Christ, and maketh manifest through us the savour of his knowledge *in every place*."

2. The image before the mind of the Apostle is the triumphant entry of a Roman general who, after some victorious campaign, has returned to the capital laden with spoils. The civic dignitaries met him at the gate. The long vista of the Sacred Way that led to the Temple of Jupiter—the most venerable spot in the imperial city—was lined with crowds of spectators. The route was strewn with flowers, and adorned with various devices. The doors of the temples were flung wide open, and from innumerable altars clouds of incense were wafted into the streets. There also fragrant spices were burnt till the air was filled with the rarest perfumes. As the stately procession advanced, with its troops of prisoners and trains of waggons, a shout of universal joy rent the air. It was the moment when the proud and boastful confidence of the people tasted its most exquisite gratification, when the wine of their exultation was quaffed to the dregs. But amid all the rejoicing and smoking of incense, there were some whose hearts were full of ominous forebodings. The captives who enhanced the glory and lustre of the victor were destined to taste the severity of their masters. Arrived at the temple, which marked the termination of the route, some were mercilessly slain, to show how Rome rewarded her opponents, while some were spared, to remember what they owed to her haughty generosity. To the one the pageantry of the spectacle with its far-spreading odours was a savour of death unto death, to the others a savour of life unto life. So, says St. Paul, has it been with us. God has led us about "from place to place in the train of His triumph to celebrate His victory over the enemies of Christ." *By* us He has made known the reality of His might, *in* us has been seen the evidence of His conquest; and wherever we have gone there we have been a living testimony to His prevailing prowess. Just as the prisoners who were paraded through the streets of Rome showed that the victorious general had been engaged in no sham warfare, so we have been led from place to place as proofs of the saving vigour of the gospel of His grace.

¶ A couple of centuries earlier, Corinth had fallen before the military prowess of Rome. The ruin of the city had been

completed by a conflagration in which, as St. Paul had before reminded them, the hovels of the vast slave population, built of "wood, hay, stubble," had been consumed. But in addition, Mommius, the victorious consul, had collected many of the pictures and statues of the city to adorn, together with a train of captives, his triumph. Perhaps the ancestors of some of those to whom St. Paul wrote had been of that throng; the memory, at least, of that humiliation could not have died away. Yet the blush of shame which the mention thereof brought to the face must have been lost in astonishment at one who rejoiced in his defeat, and exulted in that he was led captive—and that always—by the conquering grace of God.[1]

## I.

### The Conqueror.

1. God Himself is the great Conqueror. It was God who in the Person of Christ had entered into conflict with the enemies of man, and having spoiled principalities and powers, had made a show of them openly. Our triumphs only begin after God has triumphed over us, after He has brought us to follow in the order of His progress, and so to testify to the riches of His grace. He had begun His triumph over the Apostle when He changed him at Damascus from a bitter foe into a faithful servant, and there also the triumphs of St. Paul himself had commenced. Every service he had rendered since, every hardship he had suffered, every deed he had dared, had only attested how thorough and complete that victory had been. And so it must be with us all. So long as we prevail and carry everything before us, so long are we really suffering defeat. We are straining our efforts to win inferior and worthless prizes, while we allow the only good ones to remain unsought. And attainment in such a case is worse than failure. It confirms the soul in its false pursuit, hardens it into a habit of selfishness, and, while deceiving our hearts with the plaudits of a triumph, rivets upon us the fetters of the slave. Only when God checks us in our wilful course and shows us the folly of our doings, only when He baffles us and brings us to see, through the ruin and dim perplexity of our defeated aims, the nobler purposes He has

[1] J. T. L. Maggs, *The Spiritual Experience of St. Paul*, 45.

called us to embrace, do we begin to master our worst foes and win our truest victories.

2. How does God gain the victory over us? As was said about the first Christian emperor, so it may be said about the great Emperor in the heavens, "*In hoc signo vinces*"—"by this sign Thou shalt conquer!" For His only weapon is the cross of His Son, and He fights only by the manifestation of infinite love, sacrifice, suffering, and pity. He conquers as the sun conquers the thick-ribbed ice by raying down its heat upon it, and melting it into sweet water. So God in Christ fights against the mountains of man's cold, hard sinfulness and alienation, and turns them all into rivers that flow in love and praise, by the warmth of His own radiation. He conquers simply by forbearance and pity and love.

¶ Petrus Venerabilis approached the Moslem, as he says, "not with arms but with words, not by force but by reason, not in hatred but in love"; and in so far he was the first to breathe the true missionary spirit toward the Saracens. But he did not go out to them. It was reserved for the Spanish knight to take up the challenge and go out single-handed against the Saracens, "not by force but by reason, not in hatred but in love." It was Raymund Lull who wrote: "I see many knights going to the Holy Land beyond the seas and thinking that they can acquire it by force of arms; but in the end all are destroyed before they attain that which they think to have. Whence it seems to me that the conquest of the Holy Land ought not to be attempted except in the way in which Thou and Thine apostles acquired it, namely, by love and prayers, and the pouring out of tears and of blood."[1]

## II.

### The Captives.

1. St. Paul thinks of himself and of his coadjutors in Christian work as being conquered captives, made to follow the Conqueror and to swell His triumph. He is thankful to be so overcome. What was deepest degradation is to him supreme honour. The image implies a prior state of hostility and alienation. St. Paul was one who had resolutely kicked against the pricks. He had stood out against the claims of the new faith and allegiance to the

[1] S. M. Zwemer, *Raymund Lull*, 52.

sway of Christ. "I verily thought with myself, that I ought to do many things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth." This rebel heart Jesus would win. As there have been men whose defeat has seemed essential to the extension of the Kingdom of God, foemen whose boldness or strength of character has marked them as heroes in the ranks of wickedness, so was this enthusiast for Judaism a foe whom Christ would vanquish and bind, and then win over to Himself. As Captain of our salvation He entered upon the campaign, and in the broad plain outside the gates of Damascus there was struck the decisive blow that broke down the persecutor's resistance, vanquished him in the struggle, and led him away a conquered man. Yet learning that this loss was gain, that in his defeat by Christ it was as though he had won a splendid victory, he cries: "I thank Him who leadeth me in triumph."

St. Paul rejoices that he is led in the train of his conquering Lord. This, he declares, is the real significance of his apostolic ministry. Across rivers and seas, over mountains and across plains, into cities and through wildernesses, among cultured yet degenerate men, among hardy highlanders is he led, the trophy of Divine grace. Yet in that service he never wearies, but loses himself in the joy of the victorious Lord. His wanderings are not self-chosen; he is but a captive following the Conqueror's car. Men gaze at him spending his life, sacrificing his comfort and all else to diffuse a faith he once resolutely opposed; they see the unshrinking, unmeasured devotion which dedicates his very being to his apostolic work. Well, he is but a vanquished man, whose whole work now is to adorn, as best he may, his Conqueror's triumph. If men would know the invincible power of the Lord of armies, let them mark him who now attends His triumph, the former champion of Judaism, of old the persecutor of the Church; and let them listen to his boast, "I thank Him who always leadeth me in triumph." For the hand of Jesus bound up the wound, assuaged the aching smart of his discomfiture; the victory of Divine might became the victory of Divine love; and the submission of defeat grew into the allegiance of devotion.

2. And why does he rejoice? Because the captives led by God share in the great triumph. They may be a spectacle to angels or to men. Sometimes in the stocks; often accounted the

off-scouring of all things; yet, in the spiritual realm, they are made to triumph always. Conquered, they conquer; enslaved, they are free; last in this world, but in the front rank of heavenly society. God has first triumphed over them, and is now making them partners of His triumph. Conybeare and Howson thus translate the language of the text: "But thanks be to God, who leads me on from place to place in the train of His triumph, to celebrate His victory over the enemies of Christ; and by me sends forth the knowledge of Himself, a stream of fragrant incense, throughout the world." A pretty free translation, it is true; but embodying, no doubt, the precise meaning of the writer. St. Paul regarded himself as a signal trophy of God's victorious power in Christ; his Almighty Conqueror leading him about through all the cities of the Greek and Roman world, as an illustrious example of His power at once to subdue and to save. The foe of Christ was now the servant of Christ. Grace Divine had subdued and disarmed him. The rebel, the persecutor, the conspirator with hell, was brought into subjection, and rejoiced in his burden as a blessing. As to be led in triumph by man is miserable degradation, so to be led in triumph by the Lord of Hosts is highest honour and blessedness.

3. The number and the quality of the captives who walked in the triumphal procession of any Roman general were the measure of the magnitude of the victory won by him. People could argue from the multitude and the rank of the captives up to the skill and prowess of the victorious general. In much the same way the power, the subduing and resistless power of Jesus, is revealed by the captives He takes, by the multitude of prisoners who walk before His triumphal car. In imagination one can see the triumphal procession of which the Apostle here speaks. And when it comes to the trophies of victory, they are a multitude which no man can number; they are of every kindred and tribe and people and tongue; they are of every colour and speech.

¶ All these centuries Jesus Christ has been casting His spell upon the great thinkers of the world, and taking captive their hearts. Augustine, Galileo, Francis Bacon, John Milton, John Locke, Samuel Butler, Alfred Tennyson, Robert Browning—they are all in the procession. People tell us that in these days science is discarding faith. Some loud and blatant folk tell us that no

man of any intellect now believes. They forget that the greatest scientists of our day and time, and other master-minds like the late Mr. Gladstone, all delight to own allegiance to Jesus. And though there be some who seem to repudiate His authority for the moment, like that great and candid soul, G. J. Romanes, they will return to Jesus before long and gladly acknowledge Him as Lord and King. St. Paul in the procession is a tribute to the mighty power of Christ. St. Paul in the procession is a proof—if proof were needed—that we shall yet see all things put under Him; that the kingdoms of this world must become the kingdom of our Lord and of His Christ.[1]

## III.

### The Incense-Bearers.

In the second clause of the fourteenth verse the figure abruptly changes. Any attempt to explain the phrase "maketh manifest the *savour* of his knowledge" as referring to the captives is forced. The incense was carried, not by the captives, but by the incense-bearers, and St. Paul uses this feature of the procession to illustrate the work of the Christian for God. As captives God leads us in triumph in Christ; as incense-bearers it is ours to make manifest the savour of the knowledge of Christ.

1. Like incense-bearers, Christians are to spread wherever they go the knowledge of the grace of their Divine Conqueror. The captives in the procession through the streets of Rome were in a way a testimony to the general. They were a tribute to his prowess and military skill. They revealed him as a general to be feared and dreaded. And their death at a certain stage in the procession was a testimony to his pitilessness. St. Paul, too, was a testimony to his Captor. But not to His pitilessness. And not simply to His prowess. St. Paul was a testimony to His grace and mercy and love. He manifested the savour of the knowledge of God in every place. The savour of it! The sweetness and winsomeness and charm of it! A look at the captive made men realize the love and grace of the Captor. People looked at St. Paul, and they fell in love with St. Paul's Master and King. For St. Paul was a man full of radiant peace and joy. He went

[1] J. D. Jones, *The Gospel of Grace*, 180.

through the world with a singing heart and a shining face. And this was how he accounted for it: "By the grace of God I am what I am." It was his Conqueror who gave him his peace and his joy. St. Paul's speech, his looks, his life, all commended his Gospel; they gave charm and winsomeness to his message. He manifested in every place the savour of the knowledge of God.

¶ T. H. Green had been a Fellow of Balliol for twenty years or more, and for about twelve years he was Tutor in Philosophy in the College. His lectures on the Ethics of Aristotle were said to be quite the best lectures given in his time. And his personal influence was even greater than his influence as a lecturer. "I never go to see Green without feeling that I ought to be ashamed of myself, and by Jove, I am ashamed of myself," an undergraduate of these days said to me. It was not by any peculiar grace of speech or manner that he acquired this influence; his instinct was to be silent and shun society; and few of his sayings are recorded. His strong and simple character seemed to need no words to express it; he lived his thoughts, not "moving about in worlds unrealized" but carrying his convictions into practice.[1]

¶ It is personal influence that determines the size of a life; not words, or even deeds.[2]

2. The incense-bearers can manufacture no incense of their own; they derive all the incense from Christ. "We are a sweet savour of Christ unto God." By this must be meant that we may so live as to recall to the mind of God what Jesus was in His mortal career. It is as though, as God watches us from day to day, He should see Jesus in us, and be reminded of that blessed life which was offered as an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling savour. It is a gracious encouragement, "not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit."

¶ A joiner wielding a hammer, a ploughman making a furrow, a mariner guiding his bark on the ocean, a merchant conducting his business, a medical man attending his patients, a judge administering justice, a teacher instructing the young, a boy or a girl attending school, a woman whose duties lie specially at home, may each of them, in every act, be unto God a sweet perfume of Christ, because they do everything in His name, animated by love to Him, relying on His grace, and seeking His glory.[3]

[1] *The Life and Letters of B. Jowett*, ii. 192.
[2] R. W. Barbour, *Thoughts*, 72.
[3] J. Kelman, *Redeeming Judgment*, 235.

¶ In speaking on one of the Beatitudes, Dr. Moberley says that the men who exercise the greatest personal and abiding influence upon their fellows are not the great men of history, but sometimes the inconspicuous men who have lived together in the shade and have cast upon the world some sweet song, some deep thought, which lived after they were gone. He takes as illustration the names of two men who lived about 200 years ago. One of them was the famous Duke of Marlborough, who had the greatest influence perhaps among his contemporaries in setting William the Third on the throne of these realms, who became afterwards one of the greatest generals in history, who won great victories over the Grand Monarch, which will never be forgotten so long as the British flag floats anywhere in the world; and he compares with him who occupied a foremost place in the history of his day, in their present influence over the hearts and souls of men, a certain bishop—Ken—who, because he could not take the oaths of William the Third, was expelled from his bishopric, who lived in poverty, and was regarded with suspicion, but who was the author of two immortal hymns—the simple morning and evening hymns which we all know—

> "Awake, my soul, and with the sun
> Thy daily course of duty run,"

and the other,

> "Glory to Thee, my God, this night,
> For all the blessings of the light."

And Dr. Moberley asks—which of these two, the Duke or the Bishop, exercises the greater power in the world to-day? I have no hesitation in replying, he says, it is the inconspicuous bishop, whose name is not even mentioned in some of the standard works of the period. He lives in his hymns.[1]

## IV.

### The Incense.

The Apostle has viewed himself and his coadjutors as captives, and then as incense-bearers. But now he regards himself and them as the incense itself. In the Roman triumphal processions the incense arose to the gods who had given the victory; our

[1] *Memories of Horatius Bonar*, 69.

service rises as incense to the one true God. And because our service is the outcome of our living union with Christ, it is at the same time Christ's incense arising to God.

1. To St. Paul's view all those to whom he preached were divided into two classes—those who were being saved, and those who were perishing. The former were being increasingly delivered from sin, from unbelief, from unrest, from all the power of evil. While iniquity was surging around them on every side, they were becoming more and more confirmed in the choice of all good; were attaining to a remarkable beauty and nobleness of Christian character; and were free and joyful in the love and service of God. In striking contrast with the community around, they were being saved. The latter were giving themselves up to licentiousness and vice, were undergoing a process of rapid deterioration, and coming increasingly under the power of evil. Their moral nature, not to speak of their spiritual, was falling into utter wreck and ruin. In a word, they were visibly perishing.

¶ At the foot of the Capitoline Hill the ancient triumph divided. Some of the captives were led off to the dark precincts of the Tullianum, where they were put to death. Others were reserved to live. The same fragrance was associated with the perishing on the one hand and the saved on the other. Thus it is in all gospel preaching and holy living. The sun that melts wax hardens clay; the light that bleaches linen tans the hands which expose it; the cloud is the light to Israel, and darkness to Egypt. Those who have life are helped to intenser life, and those who lack it are only driven to further excesses of sin. To one we are the savour of life unto life, to the other of death unto death.[1]

2. The message, which is the sweet perfume of Christ to both classes, becomes in the one case life tending unto life, and in the other death tending unto death. That is to say, things are to us what we are to them. Opposite effects follow the same cause. The gospel that blesses some condemns others. The gospel has this peculiarity—that it touches the deepest point in our nature, and affects our character more profoundly than anything else can. It does not deal with passing phases of our life merely, or with the accidents of our environment: it bears directly upon our eternal welfare. It speaks with a clear, authoritative voice,

[1] F. B. Meyer, *Paul*, 78.

resolving its whole message into one supreme offer whose terms can hardly be misunderstood. And as every truth carries with it a certain authority just because it is truth; and the authority becomes more distinct the higher the truth is; so in the gospel which is the highest truth of all, corresponding most entirely to the sum of human needs, and thus attesting the oneness of its origin with that of the humanity which it has come to redeem—so in the gospel, there is felt to be an authority, unique of its kind, and its rejection is marked with the deepest dye of guilt.

(1) "To the one we are the savour of life unto life." The ministry of the grace of God in Christ is the breathing forth of a spiritual essence fragrant with life. It has the power of life, of the sweetness of life, of the joy of life, of the beauty of life. As ministers of "the Word of the truth of the Gospel," "as truth is in Jesus," we are sowers of living seed which grows from life to life; from life quickened to life raised up; from life liberating itself from the bondage of death, cleansing itself and putting on its beautiful garments—as summer life frees itself from its winter imprisonment—to life free, fully clothed, putting forth its blossoms and breathing out fragrance; from life weighted and restricted by its "foundations in the dust" to life which has put off all weight, free to rise in its own living vessel, and that vessel eternal in the heavens—from life to life, life natural to life spiritual.

The gospel is a perfume tending unto life, because its successful progress tends to the strengthening and developing and enlarging of the Christian life—"that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly." Conversion is a daily, hourly thing. It is the "continuous revelation of sin met by the continuous revelation of Christ." Is not this the deep pathos of life, that within each of us is going on direst contest between the sin-principle and the Christ-principle? Thus it is that Christ for us is "life unto life." The more life, the more it creates. The more of Christ, the more of life; the more of life, the more of love.

> I will go to that fair Life, the flower of lives;
> I will prove the infinite pity and love which shine
> From each recorded word of Him who once
> Was human, yet Divine.

Oh, pure sweet life, crowned by a godlike death;
Oh, tender healing hand; oh, words that give
Rest to the weary, solace to the sad,
And bid the hopeless live!

Oh, pity, spurning not the penitent thief;
Oh, wisdom stooping to the little child;
Oh, infinite purity, taking thought for lives
By sinful stains defiled![1]

(2) "To the other the savour of death unto death." St. Paul felt acutely that he could not be the minister of the word of life to men without increasing their responsibility and aggravating the condemnation of those who rejected it, who, comparatively, might have had no sin if this light of life had not shone upon them, but who now would have no cloak for their sin. For, in proportion to its quickening power of life in those who receive it, does it work death in those who refuse to accept it. Just as the balmy, life-giving breezes of spring bring life to the constitutionally sound, but death to those radically diseased, so is it with the gospel. To some it is life to hear it, to others death; to the one the sweet breath of life, to the other the odour of death—"of death unto death," the death of indifference unto the death of obduracy; the death of hopelessness unto the death of despair.

¶ As the foul malaria of a swamp tells of the presence of death, and is itself creative of more death, so an un-Christlike man reveals his moral condition as one of death, and, in revealing it, involves others in his fate. This is the law of spiritual influence. No act or thought dies, but is a living force, germinant of good or evil. Cast your deed or speech into the current of the world's life, and it will affect that current to its utmost bound. Speak but a word for God or man into the listening air, the winds will seize it and waft it adown the centuries, and men in distant lands and times, feeble and tempest-tossed, hearing it "will take heart again." The reverse holds good. Selfishness and meanness, narrowness of thought or vision, mammon-worship, indifference to the eternal realities around you let these things mould you, and you become not only dead yourself, but a bearer of death to others, a sower scattering with careless hand seeds of anarchy and ruin.[2]

[1] Sir Lewis Morris, *Songs of Two Worlds*.
[2] S. McComb.

Thought's holy place is like a sepulchre;
The wine of love's communion cup is spilled;
The House of Life is like a tavern filled
With harlots, slaves and strangers, and the stir
Of dancing feet before the flute-player,
Of shallow voices shrill and counterfeit:
And there the smoky lamps of lust are lit,
And faith is frail, and truth is sinister.
Yet, in the sacred chambers of the mind,
He lies as in his grave who is the Lord.
No rumours vex him, and his eyes are blind
As death, and he is dead—like Lazarus!
What Christ shall resurrect him with a word?
What Saviour bring him back to being thus?[1]

[1] G. C. Lodge, *Poems and Dramas*, ii. 139.

# The Liberty of the Spirit.

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## The Liberty of the Spirit.

Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty.—2 Cor. iii. 17.

We almost seem to hear a change in the tone of St. Paul's voice, and to see a new light glisten in his eyes, as in the course of his letter to the Church at Corinth he dictates these words to his amanuensis. For they are words of transition into a region and atmosphere of thought very different from that in which he has before been moving. He has been working out, with some complexity and elaboration of detail, the contrast in substance, in circumstance, and in method between the ministry of the Old Covenant and the ministry of the New; between the transient and fragmentary disclosure of an external Law, and the inner gift of a quickening Spirit, steadfast in the glory of holiness, and endless in its power to renew, to ennoble, to illuminate. With close and tenacious persistence the deep, pervading difference between the two systems has been traced; and then St. Paul seems to lift up his eyes, and to speak as one for whom the sheer wonder of the sight he sees finds at once the words he needs. He has finished his argumentative comparison; and now the vision of the Christian life, the triumph of God's love and pity in the work of grace, the astonishing goodness that has made such things possible for sinful men, holds his gaze.

It is as when one climbs the northern slopes of the Alps with painful drudgery, through shaded paths in which every view is hidden, and stands at last upon the mountain summit, with all the wealth, brightness, and expansiveness of the Italian landscape at his feet. All that toilsome, weary, joyless work before, and now all this widespread beauty, unclouded vision, and heavenly freedom. St. Paul forgets the past in the glory before him, and sets down his rapture in this one word, "Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty." That, to St. Paul, is the distinguishing feature of the Christian life. A life of service? Yes, undoubtedly,

but still more a life of liberty. For he who follows Christ enjoys more of that coveted blessedness than any other man. That is the claim which St. Paul makes. "Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty."

## I.

### The Nature of Liberty.

1. Liberty is not licence. There are two kinds of freedom: the false, where a man is free to do what he likes; the true, where a man is free to do what he ought. The lawless man is a bond-slave whether it is primarily against his own inner life and health and growth that he sins, or against the society in which he lives, or against Almighty God, who is waiting to have mercy on him—whether it is the love of God, or the love of man, or the true unselfish love of self, that he disregards and casts aside in sloth or wilfulness or passion; in every case the ultimate, the characteristic, note of his sin is still the same: it is lawlessness: it is the abuse of will, thrusting away the task, declining from the effort, refusing the sacrifice in which lay the next step towards the end of life, the man's one *raison d'être*: it is the distortion of faculties, the wrenching aside of energy, the perversion of a trust from the purpose marked upon it, from the design which conscience seldom, if ever, wholly ceases to attest, to a morbid use, to a senseless squandering, a listless, wasteful, indolent neglect, a self-chosen and self-centred aim. Whether the sin be quiet or flagrant, brutal or refined, secret or flaunting, arrogant or faint-hearted, its deep distinctive quality, its badness and its power for havoc lie in this, that the man will not have law to reign over him; that he will do what he wills with that which is not in truth his own; that he is acting, or idling, in contempt of the law which conditions the great gift of life, and is involved in his tenure of it.

For instance, let us mark that dull rebellion of lawless thoughts; the perverseness, the ever-deepening disorder of a mind that swerves from its true calling wilfully to loiter or to brood about the thoughts of sin, about thoughts of sensuality, or of jealousy, or of self-conceit. The high faculties of memory,

reflection, fancy, observation, are dragged down from their great task: day by day the field for their lawful exercise is spread out before them: all the wonder, the beauty, the mystery, the sadness, the dignity and wretchedness, the endless interests and endless opportunities of human life and of the scene which it is crossing —these are ever coming before the mind which God created to enter into them, to find its work and training and delight and growth amidst them. And yet, all the while, in the dismal lawlessness of sin, it stays to grovel among the hateful thoughts of mean, degrading vices; or turns day after day to keep awake the memory of some sullen grudge, some fancied slight; to tend the smoky flame of some dull, unreasonable hatred: or to dwell on its own poor achievements, its fancied excellences, the scraps of passing praise that have been given to it, the dignity that its self-consciousness is making laughable. Surely it is terrible to think that a man may so go on, and so grow old, continually stumbling farther and farther from the law of his own joy and health.

¶ Liberty is the fullest opportunity for man to be and do the very best that is possible for him. I know of no definition of liberty, that oldest and dearest phrase of men, and sometimes the vaguest also, except that. It has been perverted, it has been distorted and mystified, but that is what it really means: the fullest opportunity for a man to do and be the very best that is in his personal nature to do and to be. It immediately follows that everything which is necessary for the full realization of a man's life, even though it seems to have the character of restraint for a moment, is really a part of the process of his enfranchisement, is the bringing forth of him to a fuller liberty.[1]

¶ Liberty is but a means. Woe unto you and to your future, should you ever accustom yourselves to regard it as the end! Your own individuality has its rights and duties, which may not be yielded up to any; but woe unto you and to your future, should the respect you owe unto that which constitutes your individual life ever degenerate into the fatal crime of egotism. We need liberty, as much to fulfil a duty as to exercise a right; we must retain it. But if you give to your political education a higher religious principle, liberty will become what it ought really to be —the ability to choose between various means of doing good; if you enthrone it alone, as at once means and end, it will become

[1] Phillips Brooks, *Addresses*, 82.

what some jurisconsults, copying paganism, have defined it to be —the right to use and to abuse. It will lead society first to anarchy, afterwards to the despotism which you fear.[1]

Nought nobler is, than to be free;
The stars of heaven are free because
In amplitude of liberty
Their joy is to obey the laws.
From servitude to freedom's name
Free thou thy mind in bondage pent;
Depose the fetish, and proclaim
The things that are more excellent.[2]

2. Genuine liberty, therefore, is found only in surrender to a higher will. All created things, even those we call the most free, are subject to law and rule and order. The sun who rejoices to run his course, yet knoweth his going down. The winds and storm fulfil God's appointed word. The waves of the sea have their bounds set, whence they cannot pass. For God is a God of order. In the world of politics, the freedom of a nation, such as England, does not mean that its citizens do as they please in everything. In the true home, where family life is seen at the best, there is the perfect model of freedom. There the children do not think and act just as they please. Order, rule, method, direction, are all well known and valued, and acted upon. What, then, is the liberty of the family? What gives to family life its freedom, or makes it no place of bondage? The simple, natural unconscious blending of the father's mind with that of his children, and the children's will with that of their father; the instinctive correspondence of their hearts, the sympathy of their aims, the union of their interests. The children obey, but their obedience is not dreary and dull, for the father's mind and the father's wishes express what they increasingly know to be their own true mind and their own best good. The freedom of children just means this: the power to obey gladly.

¶ Freedom consists not in refusing to recognize anything above us, but in respecting something which is above us; for, by respecting it, we raise ourselves to it, and by our very acknowledgment make manifest that we bear within ourselves what is higher, and are worthy to be on a level with it.[3]

[1] Mazzini, *Life and Writings*, iv. 313.
[2] William Watson. [3] Goethe.

Love, we are in God's hand.
How strange now, looks the life He makes us lead;
So free we seem, so fettered fast we are!
I feel He laid the fetter: let it lie![1]

3. Christ exemplified in His own life and conduct the highest liberty. He came to do not His own will, but the will of His Father. He was under authority, under orders. That was one side of His life. But the other side was one of perfect freedom, for His own will and the Father's will made one music. The Father's good pleasure and His good pleasure were one, and never crossed or clashed. Every step that He took was the step of a free man; every act that He did was done willingly, of His own choice. There was no necessity laid upon Him. He was not compelled to be poor; He elected to be poor. He was not compelled to suffer hunger, hardship, loneliness, man's spite, thankless toil, and tears; He could have escaped all that, but He took it, by deliberate choice, cheerfully. He was not compelled to lay down His life on the cross; He was master of death, and could have turned it aside. Of His own will He let men slay Him with cruel hands, not because He must, but because He freely gave Himself. The whole charm of that life was its willingness. The glory of it was its freedom. He walked and worked and taught and healed and suffered, just as His own glad, great. loving Spirit led Him.

Christ's commandments are Himself; and the sum of them all is this—a character perfectly self-oblivious, and wholly penetrated and saturated with joyful, filial submission to the Father, and uttermost and entire giving Himself away to His brethren. That is Christ's commandment which He bids us keep, and His law is to be found in His life. And then, if that be so, what a change passes on the aspect of law, when we take Christ as being our living embodiment of it. Everything that was hard, repellent, far-off, cold, vanishes. We have no longer tables of stone, but fleshy tables of a heart; and the Law stands before us, a Being to be loved, to be clung to, to be trusted, whom it is blessedness to know and perfection to be like. The rails upon which the train travels may be rigid, but they mean safety, and carry men smoothly into otherwise inaccessible lands. So the life of Jesus

[1] R. Browning, *Andrea del Sarto.*

Christ brought to us is the firm and plain track along which we are to travel; and all that was difficult and hard in the cold thought of duty becomes changed into the attraction of a living pattern and example.

¶ In every art the master is free. He can create and control. Rules do not determine him; precedents do not bind him. Where the spirit of the master is, there is liberty. He breaks old laws, and makes new ones. He even dispenses with laws, not because he despises them, but because he is a law unto himself. The law is in his heart, and he expresses it as he will. His fingers move across the organ keys, and he fills the listening air with forms, now soft as the moonlight, now wild as the storm. They are born, not of rule, but of the spirit. And as in art, so in life. Where the Spirit of the Master is, there is liberty.[1]

¶ When I am a pupil at school I begin by learning rules, but when I have mastered the science I forget the rules. I forget them in the very act of observing them—keep them most perfectly when I am unconscious of their presence. I no longer think of my scales and exercises, I no longer think of my stops and intervals; these belonged to the days of law, but I am now under grace. The master-spirit of the musician has set me free—not free from the law, but free in it. I travel over the old scales and exercises, over the old stops and intervals, unconscious that they are still on the wayside. I pass unnoticed the places of my former pain; I go through undisturbed the scenes of my youth's perplexity, for the spirit of music has made me free, and its law is most destroyed when it is most fulfilled.[2]

## II.

### The Sphere of Liberty.

"Where the Spirit of the Lord is." The Spirit of the Lord is everywhere, but He is specially in those who believe in Christ. His presence is accentuated in the Christian. The believer is the shrine of the Holy Spirit. And therefore in Christianity alone is true freedom to be found. "Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty"—and nowhere else. The religion of the Saviour has a monopoly of genuine liberty.

[1] J. E. McFadyen, *The Divine Pursuit*, 75.
[2] G. Matheson, *Voices of the Spirit*, 178.

The specific liberty which is here more particularly in question consisted in the "taking away of the veil," which had hidden from the Jew the deeper, that is the Christian, sense of the Old Testament. It is not merely liberty from the yoke of the law. It is liberty from the tyranny of obstacles which cloud the spiritual sight of truth. It is liberty from spiritual rather than intellectual dulness; it is liberty from a state of soul which cannot apprehend truth. The Eternal Spirit still gives this liberty. He gave it, in the first age of the gospel, to those Jews whom, like St. Paul himself, He led to the knowledge and love of Jesus Christ.

But the text covers a much larger area than is required for the particular conclusion to which it is a premiss. It is the enunciation of a master-feature of the gospel. It proclaims a great first principle which towers high above the argument, into which it is introduced for the purpose of proving a single point. "Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty." Freedom is not an occasional largess of the Divine Spirit; it is not merely a reward for high services or conspicuous devotion. It is the invariable accompaniment of the Spirit's true action. Or rather, it is the very atmosphere of His presence. Wherever He really is, there is also freedom. He does not merely strike off the fetters of some narrow national prejudice, or of some antiquated ceremonialism. He does not descend from Heaven to subvert an earthly despotism. He comes not that He may provide for "the freedom of man's outward individual action, consistently with the safety of human society." His mission is not to bestow an external, political, social freedom. For no political or social emancipation can give real liberty to an enslaved soul. And no tyranny of the State or of society can enslave a soul that has been really freed. Nor is the freedom which He sheds abroad in Christendom a poor reproduction of the restless, volatile, self-asserting, sceptical temper of pagan Greek life, adapted to the forms and thoughts of modern civilization, and awkwardly expressing itself in Christian phraseology. If He gives liberty, it is in the broad, deep sense of that word. At His bidding, the inmost soul of man has free play; it moves hither and thither; it rises heavenward, like the lark, as if with a buoyant sense of unfettered life and power. This liberty comes with the gift of truth;

it comes along with that gift of which in its fulness the Eternal Spirit is the only Giver. He gives freedom from error for the reason; freedom from constraint for the affections; freedom for the will from the tyranny of sinful desires. Often has human nature imagined for itself such a freedom as this; it has sketched the outlines more or less accurately; it has sighed in vain for the reality. Such freedom is, in fact, a creation of grace: the sons of God alone enjoy it. "Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty."

¶ If the Spirit of God is not within a man's reach, so that he may make use of it in the apprehension of Divine truth, he is incapable of apprehending it, and therefore cannot easily be considered responsible for not doing it. I am thus led to conclude that the Spirit is in such a way and sense present in every man, that the man, if he will yield himself up to its instruction, giving up his own self-wisdom, may so use it as to apprehend the things of God by it. And I believe further that the Spirit is there for that very end, and it is pressing itself on the attention and acceptance of every man, and that the man's continuance in darkness and sin is in fact nothing else than a continued resistance to the Holy Spirit.[1]

1. The Spirit of Christ gives liberty in the sphere of *thought*. The mind is led into the truth. "Ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free." Such is the freedom known and realized when we become spiritually enlightened. It is like the morning dawn—the light breaks into our inner being, and we become conscious that we have been brought into an illuminated atmosphere. We know and feel that our mental being has found its true element. What the air is to the bird, and what the water is to the fish, the truth of God is to our minds. As the bird spreads its wings, so our powers and faculties expand, and find in this new element a liberty, an enlargement, that fills our souls with a peculiar gladness.

And we may grow in freedom. We may be learning how to think; we may be casting out or bringing under sharp control the tendencies that trouble and confuse us, we may be redeeming our intellect from all that enslaves, dishonours and enfeebles it. And for all this we certainly need help and guidance; we need that

[1] *Letters of Thomas Erskine of Linlathen*, ii. 196.

some Presence, pure and wise and strong beyond all that is of this world, should bend over us, should come to us, should lead us into the light. The truth must make us free. For the powers that are to grow in freedom must be keen and vivid; their liberty must be realized and deepened and assured in ordered use; they must be ever winning for themselves fresh strength and light as they press along their line of healthful growth towards the highest aim they can surmise. And so there can be no liberty of thought without the love of truth—that quickening and ennobling love which longs for truth, not as the gratification of curiosity, not as the pledge of fame, not as the monument of victory, but rather as that without which the mind can never be at rest, or find the meaning and the fulness of its own life—a love more like the love of home; a love sustained by forecasts of that which may be fully known hereafter; by fragments which disclose already something of truth's perfect beauty, as its light streams out across the waves and through the night, to guide the intellect in the strength of love and hope to the haven where it would be.

2. The Spirit of Christ gives liberty in the sphere of *conduct*. On the face of dark and troubled waters the Spirit moves; moves because it must. The Spirit—for wind and spirit are alike in the Greek—the Spirit bloweth. And to men stifled in the atmosphere of precedent and prejudice welcome are the breezes that blow from the Alpine heights of some strong nature in whom the Spirit dwells. The Spirit bloweth where it listeth, not in the wake of some other spirit, but where it will; for it is original and free. Jesus breathed His Spirit upon twelve unheard-of men: and ancient faiths crumbled at their touch. He breathed upon a German miner's son; an old church tottered, and a new world burst into being. If He breathe upon us, may not we do things as great as these?

(1) This implies deliverance from the bondage of sin. Guilt on the conscience will rob the soul of all liberty. There can be no freedom of utterance, no holy boldness, no liberty in the presence of God, if sin, in its guilt and defilement, lies on the conscience. "Having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience" is essential in order to enter into the "holiest of all." An eman-

cipated conscience is a purged conscience. When this is realized, the soul is in an atmosphere of peace. It is in this peace that the conscience finds its freedom. But it is only through "the blood of his cross" that this can be known. When we see the meaning of Christ's death, when we accept it as that which brings us into a relation of reconciliation with God, we know what peace means. We see then that we not only stand on the work of peace, but have been brought into Him who is our peace. The conscience finds its freedom in the atmosphere of Divine peace.

¶ Dora Greenwell tells us that she once saw the hymn, "I lay my sins on Jesus," printed out in large text hand and firmly pinned on the pillow of a dying factory woman, "so that she might be sure it was always there"—even as a hand holding out a leaf from the Tree of Life.[1]

¶ We sometimes see old leaves on a tree all the winter through, clinging with a strange tenacity to the boughs. The fiercest storms do not loosen them, nor do the keenest frosts. But when spring comes round, and the sap begins to rise, the old, unsightly leaves do not need to be torn off; they drop off themselves, they are pushed off by the new power flowing through every branch; the new life displaces the old. How many old leaves of sinful habits and sinful lusts and sinful desires and sinful ambitions linger in the soul, and show a strange tenacity, and defy all outward influences to tear them off! How are they to be got rid of? Only by the rising of the new life within. Let the Spirit of Life take possession of us, and these things will drop away almost before we know.[2]

Ulysses, sailing by the Sirens' isle,
Sealed first his comrades' ears, then bade them fast
Bind him with many a fetter to the mast,
Lest those sweet voices should their souls beguile,
And to their ruin flatter them, the while
Their homeward bark was sailing swiftly past;
And thus the peril they behind them cast,
Though chased by those weird voices many a mile.
But yet a nobler cunning Orpheus used:
No fetter he put on, nor stopped his ear,
But ever, as he passed, sang high and clear

[1] *Memories of Horatius Bonar*, 108.
[2] G. H. Knight, *Divine Upliftings*, 114.

The blisses of the Gods, their holy joys,
And with diviner melody confused
And marred earth's sweetest music to a noise.[1]

(2) This means also freedom for the will. A man may see and know the right, and yet shrink from doing it, because of the fear of suffering or reproach. This is to be in a state of bondage. He may see the evil and know that it is his duty to avoid it, and yet he may be drawn to yield to it because of the pleasure that is more or less blended with it. How is liberty from such a condition to be brought about? Suppose that the will is strengthened, and that by dint of a high sense of duty the man is enabled to rise superior to the power of his passions; shall we have in such an one an example of true liberty? Surely not. What the will needs, in the first place, is not strengthening, but liberating. It must first be brought into its proper environment; there it finds its freedom. It may be weak, but it is no small matter that it is free. And being liberated, it is now prepared to be strengthened. The element in which the will finds its freedom is the love of God.

¶ In the paper on "The Force of Circumstances" (*Works of T. H. Green*, iii. 3) the relation of the Divine spirit to the human individual is more particularly developed. The "environment" or "system" of which each man may be regarded as the centre, is not "the outcome of the workings of the human mind," nor on the other hand is the human mind its creature or slave. If rightly regarded, it manifests to us in various ways "the spirit in whom we live, and move, and have our being"; through what we call the "external world," the Divine mind, in whose likeness we are, is continually communicated to us, and in this communication we find ourselves and attain freedom. Man becomes free, not by flying from the inevitable nor by blindly acquiescing in it, but by recognizing in his very weakness and dependence the call of a being "whose service is perfect freedom."[2]

¶ There are two stages of experience, both included in the life of the Christian—the one being animated chiefly by a sense of right, the other by the power of love. We may illustrate the two stages by two concentric circles—the outer circle representing the duty-life, and the inner circle the love-life. We may be within the first, and yet not within the second; but it is impossible to be within the inner circle, and not be within the outer circle

[1] R. C. Trench, *Poems*, 143. [2] R. L. Nettleship, *Thomas Hill Green*, 29.

also. So, if we are "dwelling in love," we shall know what it is to do the right for its own sake as well as from inclination.[1]

3. Liberty is not perfectly realized until it has transformed our outward conditions. Meantime its progress is evident. Wherever the gospel of the grace of God has free way—is preached and accepted—there you always find liberty following in its wake. Liberty is the attendant angel of the gospel. Let God's truth lay hold of any land, and despotism dies. The gospel creates an atmosphere that suffocates a despot; and where it is free it exercises an influence under which slavery of every description is certain to wither. Has it not been so in our own history as a nation? England owes her present liberty and all her glorious privileges to the possession of a Bible. Search through history and you will always find that a nation's greatest benefactors have been religious men; you will find also that those who have struck the hardest blows for political liberty have been those who have loved the gospel most dearly. What all the secret political societies in the world may fail to do, that the gospel will accomplish simply and easily if only it is once let free. Let the truth as it is in Jesus spread through India, and India's caste thraldom shall be broken through. Let the truth only win its way amongst the nations of Europe, and all tyrannies shall depart; for "where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty."

¶ Just as the alabaster box was in the house, and its presence may not have been known, so Christ has been a long time with many of His disciples, and they have not known Him; that is, they have been comparatively ignorant of His glorious fulness. But no sooner was the box broken, and the ointment shed abroad, than the odour filled the house. So, when the love of God is poured forth by the Holy Ghost, when the infinite treasures of Divine love stored up in Christ are disclosed, revealed in us, shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost, their subduing, liberating, and transforming influences begin at once to be seen and felt.[2]

¶ There is a meadow in a lonely place between high rocks on the banks of Lake Lucerne. In that spot, five hundred years ago, one still, dark evening, three patriot soldiers, with stout blades and sturdy hearts, met to spend the night in long and earnest prayer to God. "Where the Spirit of the Lord was, there was liberty";

[1] E. H. Hopkins, *The Law of Liberty in the Spiritual Life*, 86.
[2] E. H. Hopkins.

and Swiss Independence dates from that night. "The knowledge of the Lord" has not yet "filled the earth as the waters cover the sea"; but there is coming a time when, as we are told, it shall; when all the kingdoms of this earth's monarchs shall become the absolutely free kingdoms of our spirits' Ruler, "the Lord, and of his Christ." Adam's degenerate sons, banished from Paradise—*i.e.*, limited in liberty on account of sin—shall again regain it. Along the pathway of the world's progress, we need not hear alone the wails of woe and the clanking chains of bondage; we need not see alone the flames of cherished institutions, and the stifling smoke of conflict. Beyond all these, there is a stretch of heaven's own blue. There is a gleam of lofty walls. There is the flashing of a flaming sword withdrawn. Between wide open gates, there waits for all the garden.[1]

A voice from the sea to the mountains,
  From the mountains again to the sea:
A call from the deep to the fountains,
  O spirit! be glad and be free!

A cry from the floods to the fountains,
  And the torrents repeat the glad song,
As they leap from the breast of the mountains,
  O spirit! be free and be strong!

The pine forests thrill with emotion
  Of praise, as the spirit sweeps by;
With a voice like the murmur of ocean,
  To the soul of the listener they cry.

O sing, human heart, like the fountains,
  With joy reverential and free;
Contented and calm as the mountains,
  And deep as the woods and the sea.[2]

[1] G. L. Raymond, *The Spiritual Life*, 305.
[2] Charles Timothy Brooks.

# Transformed by Beholding.

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## Transformed by Beholding.

**But we all, with unveiled face reflecting as a mirror (A.V. beholding as in a glass) the glory of the Lord, are transformed into the same image from glory to glory, even as from the Lord the Spirit (A.V. even as by the Spirit of the Lord).—2 Cor. iii. 18.**

It is certain that there is nothing but character that we can carry out of life with us, and that our prospect of good in any future life will undoubtedly vary with the resemblance of our character to that of Jesus Christ, which is to rule the whole future. We all admit that; but almost every one of us offers to himself some apology for not being like Christ, and has scarcely any clear reality of aim of becoming like Him. Why, we say to ourselves, or we say in our practice, it is really impossible in a world such as ours to become perfectly holy. One or two men in a century may have become great saints; given a certain natural disposition, and given exceptionally favouring circumstances, men may become saintly; but surely the ordinary run of men, men such as we know ourselves to be, with secular disposition and with many strong, vigorous passions—surely we can really not be expected to become like Christ, or, if it is expected of us, we know that it is impossible. On the contrary, St. Paul says, "We all." Every Christian has that for a destiny—to be changed into the image of his Lord. And he not only says so, but in this one verse he reveals to us the mode of becoming like Christ, and a mode, as we shall find, so simple and so infallible in its working that a man cannot understand it without renewing his hope that even he may one day become like Christ.

In order to understand this simplest mode of sanctification let us look at an incident in the Book of Exodus (xxxiv. 29–35). St. Paul had been reading how, when Moses came down from the mount, where he had been speaking with God, his face shone so as to dazzle and alarm those who were near him. They at once

recognized that that was the glory of God reflected from him; and just as it is almost as difficult for us to look at the sun reflected from a mirror as to look directly at the sun, so these men felt it almost as difficult to look straight at the face of Moses as to look straight at the face of God. But Moses was a wise man, and he showed his wisdom in this instance as well as elsewhere. He knew that this glory was only on the skin of his face, and that of course it would pass away. It was a superficial shining. And accordingly he put a veil over his face, that the children of Israel might not see it dying out from minute to minute and from hour to hour; for he knew these Israelites thoroughly, and he knew that when they saw the glory dying out they would say, "God has forsaken Moses. We need not attend to him any more. His authority is gone and the glory of God's presence has passed from him." So Moses wore the veil that they might not see the glory dying out. But whenever he was called back to the presence of God he took off the veil and received a new access of glory on his face, and thus went "from glory to glory."

That, says St. Paul, is precisely the process through which we Christian men become like Christ. We go back to the presence of Christ with unveiled face; and as often as we stand in His presence, as often as we deal in our spirit with the living Christ, so often do we take on a little of His glory. The glory of Christ is His character; and as often as we stand before Christ, and think of Him, and realize what He was, our heart goes out and reflects some of His character. And that reflection, that glory, is not any longer merely on the skin of the face; as St. Paul wishes us to recognize, it is a spiritual glory, it is wrought by the Spirit of Christ upon our spirit, and it is we ourselves that are changed from glory to glory into the very image of the Lord.

¶ There are different ways of looking at Jesus, degrees in looking. Our experiences with Jesus affect the eyes of the heart. When John as an old man was writing that first epistle, he seems to recall his experience in looking that first day. He says, "that which we have *seen* with our eyes, that which we beheld." From seeing with the eyes he has gone to earnest, thoughtful *gazing*, caught with the vision of what he saw. That was John's own experience. It is everybody's experience that gets a look at Jesus. When the first looking sees something that catches fire within, then does the inner fire affect the eye, and more is seen. Looking at

Jesus *changes us.* Paul's famous words in the second Corinthian letter have a wondrous tingle of gladness in them. "We all, with open face beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are changed from glory to glory." The change comes through our looking. The changing power comes in through the eyes. It is the glory of the Lord that is seen. The glorious Jesus looking in through our looking eyes changes us. It is gradual. It is ever more, and yet more, till by and by His own image comes out fully in our faces.

That sentence of Paul's had also this meaning. "We all with open face *reflecting* as in a mirror the glory of the Lord are changed." We stand between Him and those who do not know Him. We are the mirror catching the rays of His face and sending them down to those around. And not only do those around see the light—His light—in us, but we are being changed all the while. For others' sake as well as our own the mirror should be kept clean, and well polished so that the reflection will be distinct and true.[1]

¶ I once had a very impressive and a very memorable drive with the late Dr. Parker. Part of the journey lay through a somewhat narrow defile, and as twilight was falling we moved through the gathering gloom, and here and there the encompassing hills were broken and the valley was illumined, and we passed through areas of sunlit brightness. But at length the straitened defile ended, and we emerged before a western sky of amazing breadth, and of unspeakable grandeur and glory, and I remember that, as we issued from the pass and came face to face with the glory, Dr. Parker raised his hand in great wonder and just said, "Light, Light." I cannot tell you why or how it is, but that little incident has during the last two weeks returned again and again to my mind as I have been meditating upon the words in this text. It seems to have offered itself again and again as a symbolism to express the journeyings of the Apostle's mind, for in the early part of this letter, when the Apostle's thought moves through a somewhat narrow defile, needfully touching upon gloomy themes, broken here and there by radiant patches, and at last emerging face to face with ineffable light and splendour, it is just at the point of emergence that we catch the Apostle in my text. The gloom is behind, the grandeur is before. The Apostle is held in awed amazement. He has come out of the narrow defile, and "we all, with unveiled faces reflecting as a mirror the glory of the Lord, are transformed into the same image from glory to glory."[2]

[1] S. D. Gordon, *Quiet Talks on Service*, 17.

[2] J. H. Jowett, in *The British Weekly*, March 2, 1911.

## I.

### The Beholding.

"We all, with open face beholding as in a glass." In the Revised Version of this verse there are four changes, three of which are clear gains: "unveiled" instead of "open," "mirror" instead of "glass," and "transformed" instead of "changed." But "reflecting" for "beholding" is of doubtful advantage; Chrysostom, followed by Theodoret, expounds the word as meaning "reflect like a mirror." But it is not found in this sense in any independent passage. This meaning was suggested to Chrysostom probably only by this verse. The verb in question is never predicated of the reflecting mirror; but always in the active voice of him who causes the reflection, and in the middle voice of him who sees reflected in a mirror either himself or some object beneficial (or hurtful) to himself. Of these two meanings of the middle voice, the latter is in the passage before us suggested at once by the accusative, "the glory" governed by the verb. And that this is the sense designed by the Apostle is made clear by the context. For, if the unveiled ones are already reflecting the glory of Christ, it is needless and meaningless to say, as the Revisers make St. Paul say, that they "are being transformed into the same image": for the change would be already effected, especially as the word "image" suggests outward form, not inward essence. The other rendering, now pushed into the margin, states appropriately the means of the change, viz. contemplation of the reflected glory; and thus supplies the link connecting the unveiled face with the progressive transformation into the same image. It also keeps up the contrast, suggested by "we all," of the unveiled Christians and the veiled Jews; while the word "transformed" reminds us of Moses returning unveiled into the presence of God, and thus rekindling his faded brightness.

The analogy is taken from the effect of a mirror—not of glass as ours are, but of burnished metal. The effect described is that of sunshine thrown back from polished metal. You may stand before a mere painting of light and colours, but there is no transmission of the light to you. On the other hand, stand before a mirror whence the sun is reflected, and you too are bathed in light and dazzled with the glory.

1. We *all* behold. Notice the emphasis on the universality of this prerogative: "We all." This vision does not belong to any select handful: the spiritual aristocracy of God's Church is not the distinction of the lawgiver, the priest, or the prophet; it does not depend upon special powers or gifts, which in the nature of things can belong only to a few. There is none of us so weak, so low, so ignorant, so compassed about with sin, but that upon our happy faces that light may rest, and into our darkened hearts that sunshine may steal.

In that Old Dispensation, the light that broke through clouds was but that of the rising morning. It touched the mountain tops of the loftiest spirits—a Moses, a David, an Elijah caught by the early gleams, while all the valleys slept in the pale shadow, and the mist clung in white folds to the plains. But noon has come, and, from its steadfast throne in the very zenith, the sun which never sets pours down its rays into the deep recesses of the narrowest gorge, and every little daisy and hidden flower catches its brightness, and "there is nothing hid from the heat thereof." We have no privileged class or caste now; no fences to keep out the mob from the place of vision, while lawgiver and priest gaze upon God. Christ reveals Himself to all His servants in the measure of their desire after Him. Whatsoever special gifts may belong to a few in His Church, the greatest gift belongs to all. The servants and the handmaidens have the Spirit, the children prophesy, the youths see visions, the old men dream dreams. "The mob," "the masses," "the plebs," or whatever other contemptuous name the heathen aristocratic spirit has for the bulk of men, makes good its standing within the Church as possessor of Christ's chiefest gifts. Redeemed by Him, it can behold His face and be glorified into His likeness. Not as Judaism with its ignorant mass, and its enlightened and inspired few; we *all* behold the glory of the Lord.

2. We behold *with unveiled face.* The words refer to the immediate and clear view which we obtain in the New Testament of the character and work of Christ. Under the Jewish dispensation Christ was exhibited, but it was as it were through a veil In the infancy of the Church it was instructed by the Law as a schoolmaster, after the manner in which the teacher is accustomed

to instruct his younger pupils, by means of vivid representations, by signs and by symbols. But, just because the teaching was by means of shadows, there was a mystery attached to it. The people could not worship except through a priesthood and sacrifice. From their holy temple the light of day was excluded, and the only light was that supplied by the seven-branched golden candlestick. Into the holiest of all, representing the Divine presence, the high priest alone entered, and this only once a year, and not without blood. In the service of the synagogue, the worshippers sat with their heads veiled in deepest reverence when the Law was read. But now, when Christ came, the mystery which had been hid for ages was revealed. At the hour when Jesus said, "It is finished," the veil, which hid the holiest of all and the innermost secrets of the covenant, was rent in twain from top to bottom.

(1) Among the veils that need to be removed is that of *ignorance*. We do not mean the ignorance of the deeper things of God. Do you remember how the Apostle speaks of the need of the eyes of our understanding being enlightened, that we may know? There is a veil of ignorance that has to be lifted.

(2) There is also a veil of *prejudice*. We remember Nathanael. "Can any good thing come out of Nazareth?" Philip's answer to him was the only wise answer, "Come and see!" To the man who looks through yellow glasses, all the world is yellow. Nothing can be done until they are laid aside. If we want God's blessing, there must be the removal of the veil.

(3) And there is the veil of *heart-sin*. The condition of the vision of God is heart purification. "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God." How often we have seen some gross form of sin, some guilty passion, completely shut out from the life all care for spiritual things. We recognize it then; but it is equally true in the secret recess of the soul. When the sin is hidden there, there also must the cleansing be. And mark that the purification of the heart is by faith, not by effort. "Purifying their hearts by faith." There is an immediate work of God that can remove the veil.

(4) One thing more—the thickest, heaviest veil of all—has yet to be mentioned. It is the veil of *unbelief*. "Said I not unto thee, that, if thou wouldest believe, thou shouldest see the glory of God?"—the very thing you want to see. We must have faith

for it, the vision of faith. We must venture to contradict our past experience, and live for a deeper and a better experience, than we have ever had, if our life is to be transformed.

¶ Throw a napkin over a mirror, and it reflects nothing. Perfect beauty may stand before it, but the mirror gives no sign. And this is why in a dispensation like ours, the Christian dispensation, with everything contrived to reflect Christ, to exhibit Christ, the whole thing set agoing for this purpose of exhibiting Christ, we so little see Him. How is it that two men can sit at a Communion table together, and the one be lifted to the seventh heaven and see the King in His beauty, while the other only envies his neighbour his vision? Why is it that in the same household two persons will pass through identically the same domestic circumstances, the same events, from year to year, and the one see Christ everywhere, while the other grows sullen, sour, indifferent? Why is it? Because the one wears a veil that prevents him from seeing Christ; the other lives with unveiled face. How was it that the Psalmist, in the changes of the seasons even, in the mountain, in the sea, in everything that he had to do, found God? How was it that he knew that even though he made his bed in hell he would find God? Because he had an unveiled face; he was prepared to find God. How is it that many of us can come into church and be much more taken up with the presence of some friend than with the presence of Christ? The same reason still: we wear a veil; we do not come with unveiled face prepared to see Him.[1]

3. We behold *in a mirror*. What is the mirror? Here are two mirrors.

(1) One is His Word, the Gospel-story which tells—

> How He walked here, the shadow of Him Love,
> The speech of Him soft Music, and His step
> A Benediction.

This is the precious service which the Evangelists rendered to succeeding ages: they preserved the image of Jesus, painting His sacred form in imperishable colours as He appeared to the men who dwelt beside Him and saw His blessed face and heard His gracious voice. There are no Scriptures comparable to the holy Gospels. They are the shrine of the Incarnate Son of God, and we should be ever searching them, ever returning to them with fresh wonder

[1] M. Dods, *How to Become Like Christ*, 23.

and expectation, ever breathing their atmosphere and catching their spirit. They are the mirror of the Saviour's face. The other Scriptures speak of Him; these reflect Him.

(2) And there is another mirror which reflects Him no less truly and, in a manner, more effectively, forasmuch as it is constantly before our eyes and we cannot help looking into it—the mirror of redeemed lives that wear His likeness and have been fashioned by the Holy Spirit after His image.

¶ We have heard of a little child who had been thinking about the unseen Christ to whom she prayed. She was trying to picture to herself what He might be like. By and by she came to her mother with the question, "Is Jesus like anybody I know?" The question was not an unreasonable one, and it was one to which the child should have received the answer "Yes." Every true disciple of Christ ought to be an answer, in some sense at least, to that child's inquiry.[1]

¶ The Rev. Robert Paterson, who knew Mr. Morison as intimately as most of his friends, often observed a wonderful light in his face when he spoke of Jesus and His saving power. He says: "Speaking of light reminds me that the light, which never was on sea or land, in Morison's face at times, was to me the grandest revelation of the invisible glory I have ever had. I have seen it more or less in the faces of all spiritually minded men and women, especially the intellectually great as well, but never in any face (except at the dying bed of a young man) at all approaching the appearance of it in that of Morison."[2]

¶ Behind the message, there was the man, so cleansed from self and sin, so enamoured of Christ. "He was the meekest, calmest, and holiest believer that ever I saw," one who knew him wrote to his mother. From Morar, a Highland laird, who was Roman Catholic in faith, Aeneas Ronald Macdonell, bore the same testimony in an ingenious accent of his own. "I only once, and that but for a very short time, enjoyed the company of your dear departed Robert, yet I can honestly declare that I never was so much prepossessed in favour of any one. And when I heard his fervent eloquence in the pulpit, the candour and sincerity of his discourses so plainly spoke of the piety of his heart that I could not help saying to myself, 'That man is booked for Heaven!'" "Assuredly"—it is Dr. Candlish's tribute—"he had more of the mind of his Master than almost any one I ever knew, and realized to me more of the likeness of the beloved disciple."

[1] G. B. F. Hallock. [2] W. Adamson, *Life of Principal James Morison*

Dr. MacDonald of Leith bears similar testimony. "Mr. M'Cheyne's holiness," he says, "was noticeable even before he spoke a word; his appearance spoke for him. There was a minister in the north of Scotland with whom he spent a night. He was so marvellously struck by this about him that, when Mr. M'Cheyne left the room he burst into tears, and said, 'O, that is the most Jesus-like man I ever saw.' Robert M'Cheyne would sometimes say but one word, or quote a text; but it was blessed. I never got even a note from him that I could burn. There was always something in it worth keeping; God seemed to bless all he wrote."[1]

4. Now in order to behold in a mirror we have to observe two simple conditions.

(1) *We must stand squarely in front of it.*—We know that if a man looks into a mirror obliquely, if a mirror is not set square with him he does not see himself, but what is at the opposite angle, something that is pleasant or something that is disagreeable to us; it matters not—he does not see himself. And unless we as mirrors set ourselves perfectly square with Christ, we do not reflect Him, but perhaps things that are in His sight monstrous. And, in point of fact, that is what happens with most of us, because it is here that we are chiefly tried. All persons brought up within the Christian Church pay some attention to Christ. We understand too well His excellence and we understand too well the advantages of being Christian men not to pay some attention to Christ. But that will not make us conform to His image. In order to be conformed to the image of Christ we must be wholly His.

¶ The most important part of the training of the Twelve was one which was perhaps at the time little noticed, though it was producing splendid results—the silent and constant influence of His character on them. It was this that made them the men they became. For this, more than all else, the generations of those who love Him look back to them with envy. We admire and adore at a distance the qualities of His character; but what must it have been to see them in the unity of life, and for years to feel their moulding pressure? God was about Him like the atmosphere He breathed, or the sunlight in which He walked.[2]

¶ It is not worth while being religious unless we are altogether

[1] Alexander Smellie, *Robert Murray M'Cheyne*, 221. [2] James Stalker.

religious. It won't do to be merely playing at religion, or having religion on us as a bit of veneer. It must saturate us. Some seek first the Kingdom of God, and second the Kingdom of God, and third the Kingdom of God. I don't think a man makes anything of it if he seeks the second time. For then prayer-meetings are dull, and fellowship gatherings are uninteresting. But the moment a man begins to seek first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness, all things are right.[1]

(2) *We must stand steadily and long.*—What does a photographer say? "Quite still, please." Some of us are half losing our souls because we are not taking time enough alone with God. "The secret of religion is religion in secret." In this hurrying, restless age, there is no message, however simple it be, that needs to be reiterated more constantly and pressed more frequently upon every Christian conscience than this—we must, if we want to live a Christian life, be alone with God.

¶ A missionary who had returned home after living many years in a heathen land said that what impressed him most when he came back to America was not the stately buildings, the mechanical improvements on every hand, or the handsome girls, but the beautiful old ladies. Heathen women grow ugly as they grow old. This he attributed not so much to hard work as to a vacant mind and unimproved heart. The reverse is often seen in our country. Not that certain charms which belong to youth can be retained with advancing years, but other and better ones replace them.[2]

## II.

### The Glory of the Lord.

1. This is the object of the beholding. What is it? "The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament sheweth his handywork." But we look in vain, in creation, for the glory of which we are in search. What is this glory? It is not the essential glory of God. We cannot see that. "No man can see my face and live." It is the moral glory that we have to behold and reflect; and creation is not a sufficient guide to that glory. It does exhibit His glory; but there are mysteries all around us in nature which baffle us when we seek to read in them the

[1] Henry Drummond. [2] G. B. F. Hallock.

character of God. We remember the words of the beloved Apostle: "The Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us; and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth." It is in Christ that the glory of God is seen—in the face of Jesus Christ.

The meaning of the phrase, "the glory of the Lord," is made plainer in the next paragraph of the Epistle, when the Apostle affirms that, while "the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God" is veiled from those who do not believe, Christ in the eternal brightness of His Person and work has dawned upon his own soul, and thereby given "the light of the knowledge of the glory of God." This, then, is the all-blessed vision which is stamping upon him the image of itself and assimilating his whole character into its own likeness.

¶ As the glory of bright light, when it falls on a prism, splinters into its component rays, so the glory of God revealed in Jesus Christ divides into its essential and wondrous qualities—mercy and truth, righteousness and peace—as it strikes the Cross of Christ; and there we learn how God can be just, and the Justifier of him that believeth in Jesus. It is in Christ. Yes, it is in His life, in His *lowliness*. Have you ever meditated upon Matt. xi. 28—the one place in Scripture in which Christ speaks of His heart? "I am meek and lowly in heart." Half the difficulties in the way of accepting the revelation of God to-day would disappear if men, like their Saviour, were lowly in heart. Remember there is only one way of being lowly. It is by the indwelling of the Lowly One. Ponder the lowliness and *the loyalty*. He steadfastly set His face to go to Jerusalem until, as His disciples followed Him, they were afraid. Something about Him awed them. Yet they followed Him. They were drawn after Him by the irresistible force of love.[1]

¶ The whole nature follows love. Whithersoever it goes, all the faculties troop after it. It is the magnet of human nature. Where the heart is, there are all the treasures of mind and will and moral nature. Let this love be planted in Christ—won and fixed by our ever deepening sense of truth and goodness and all moral beauty—and we begin to go over to Him upon it as upon a bridge. Using this love as it were some broad stream, the truth, the strength, the humility, the sympathy, the very righteousness of Christ float down into us and become our own.[2]

[1] E. W. Moore. [2] Theodore T. Munger.

I beheld
From eye to eye thro' all their order flash
A momentary likeness of the King.[1]

2. Or we may say it is the glory of Christ in all the events of His life.

(1) St. Paul is contemplating the glory of the *coming* of Jesus. He marvels at the manner of His coming, for, mark you, there is a glory to be found in the possession of glory. There is a greater glory to be found in laying a glory by. You may lay aside a crown, and by the very surrender you may ascend a loftier throne. Queen Victoria was clothed in one glory when she wore her crown and the regalia of regal splendour at some brilliant function of State; she wore another glory, deeper, richer, when, laying aside the crown, she wore the weeds of common sorrow and went into a peasant's cottage in the Highlands, carrying to the sick and to the broken the balm of human comfort and the consolations of Divine grace. There is a glory that comes from surrender of glory; there is a glory that exalteth.

(2) The Apostle contemplated the glory of the *living* of Jesus, the glorious manner of His life, and when the Apostle Paul looked at the manner of the life of Jesus, what was he more especially gazing at? With what was he concerned? If we look through the eyes of St. Paul at Jesus at work in His ministry among men, what do we see? What is there glorious to look upon? Well, there is the Master, not playing with trifles on the outskirts of experience, but gloriously ministering to earth's sternest realities in the very centre of human need. What is He doing that Paul calls glorious? We see Him dealing with human guilt and overwhelming it by the energies and the grace of firmness. We see Him dealing with human sin and making weaklings invincible by the impartation of the strength of His own soul. We see Him dealing with human fears, driving them away, just as night birds are driven away by the coming of the dawn. We see Him dealing with human death, speaking to death as nobody else has ever addressed it, speaking to death as its Master; commanding it, calling upon it to loose its hold upon its victim, and to let its captive free. As we look through the eyes

[1] Tennyson, *Idylls of the King.*

of the Apostle Paul we see Jesus dealing with guilt and sin and fear and sorrow and death—and Paul said, "Glory, the glory of the Lord."

(3) Not merely the glory of the manner of His coming, and the glory and the manner of His doing and living, but the glory of His *dying*, the gloriousness of the manner of His death. To St. Paul the death of Jesus was not merely awful; it was altogether unique. He had seen Stephen die, and die gloriously, and he scarcely referred to it again. The Saviour's death he could not get away from. It was never out of his sight, never out of his mind, for in that dark pit St. Paul found his sun rise. "Out of the strong came forth sweetness; out of the eater came forth meat." Stephen's death was a martyrdom, and a glorious martyrdom, too. Jesus' death was more than a martyrdom, and therefore surpassing in glory.

(4) But even that contemplation would be very imperfect, if to the Apostle's conception of Jesus Christ as glorious we did not add the Apostle's conception of Jesus Christ *as glorified*. In the Apostle's conception of Jesus Christ, Jesus not merely walked into death, He walked out again. The glorious Jesus emerged as the glorified Lord. As St. Paul says, "Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name; that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow." And again, he speaks of "his mighty power which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead, and set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places, far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come."

It will not be questioned, by those who are at home in St. Paul's thoughts, that "the Lord" means the exalted Saviour, and that the glory must be something which belongs to Him. Indeed, if we remember that in the First Epistle, chap. ii. 8, He is characteristically described by the Apostle as "the Lord of glory," we shall not feel it too much to say that the glory is *everything* that belongs to Him. There is not any aspect of the exalted Christ, there is not any representation of Him in the Gospels, there is not any function which He exercises, that does not come under this head. "In his temple everything saith, Glory!" There is a glory even in the mode of His existence: St. Paul's conception of

Him is dominated always by that appearance on the way to Damascus, when he saw the Christ through a light above the brightness of the sun. It is His glory that He shares the Father's throne, that He is head of the Church, possessor and bestower of all the fulness of Divine grace, the coming Judge of the world, conqueror of every hostile power, intercessor for His own, and, in short, bearer of all the majesty which belongs to His kingly office. The essential thing in all this—essential to the understanding of the Apostle, and to the existence of the apostolic "gospel of the glory of Christ" (chap. iv. 4)—is that the glory in question is the glory of a living Person. When St. Paul thinks of it, he does not look back, he looks up; he does not remember, he beholds in a glass; the glory of the Lord has no meaning for him apart from the present exaltation of the Risen Christ. "The Lord reigneth; he is apparelled with majesty"—that is the anthem of his praise.

¶ Once, years ago in Normandy after a day of flooding rain, I beheld the clouds roll up and depart and the auspicious sky reappear. Once in crossing the Splügen I beheld that moving of the mists which gives back to sight a vanished world. Those veils of heaven and earth removed, beauty came to light. What will it be to see this same visible heaven itself removed and unimaginable beauty brought to light in glory![1]

## III.

### The Transformation.

This is the effect of beholding the glory of the Lord: "We are transformed into the same image from glory to glory." When any man, learned or unlearned, high or low, in sincerity and simplicity, turns his mind and heart to the glory of Jesus, he is transformed, he receives the impress of the glory. There is nothing unreasonable about it. In some respects it comes within the plane of common experience. All life that is simple and sincere is plastic. You can mould it. You can shape it. And all life that presents itself to the Lord Jesus as simple and sincere is plastic, and the glorified Jesus is impressive, and like a

[1] Christina G. Rossetti, *The Face of the Deep.*

seal on wax He conveys His glory to the mind and heart of those submitted to Him. And we are to be not merely transfigured but transformed, a very much deeper word. It is not that the Lord Jesus just sheds a lovely light on us. It is not merely that when we contemplate the glory a brilliant glow falls upon us like sunlight upon the waste. The glorified Lord does not regild us; He refashions us. We change into the same image, and that word image means stuff of His stuff; quality of His quality; partakers of the Divine nature; new creations in Christ Jesus.

Once let us learn to know ourselves and we cry with Seneca, "I would I were not so much bettered as transformed." Like Job, who had heard of God "with the hearing of the ear," and then beheld Him with open eyes, we "abhor" ourselves and "repent in dust and ashes." Nothing but a change that will remake us, and restore the beauty which has been defaced by sin, will satisfy a conscience which confesses with Isaiah, "Woe is me! for I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips." It is not enough that character should be patched up into a pitiable semblance of what it ought to be; it is not enough that we should be, as it were, made up to act in the drama of life, carrying the while a corrupt soul within. The springs of evil are in our very natures, welling up from the depths of thought and will. The stream must be cleansed at the fountain, if it is to become pure; the heart smitten with disease must be healed, if the life is to be made whole. Transformation is the only reasonable—nay, the only possible—way to attain to the holiness which must be ours if we are ever to live and walk in fellowship with God. This thought is constantly coming to the surface in St. Paul's Epistles. "Be ye transformed," he says, "by the renewing of your mind." "If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature; old things are passed away; behold, they are become new." "In Christ Jesus neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision, but a new creature." The same idea of a complete transformation of character is present in the mind of St. John when, looking forward to the final perfecting of the saints in light, he says, "We shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is." With St. Paul there is a gradual change taking place in the experience of life; his verb is in the present tense, "We are being transformed."

With St. John the process has reached its climax in the open vision of Heaven.

¶ In every eye that beholds the flame of the lamp there is a little lamp-flame mirrored and manifested. And just as what we see makes its image on the seeing organ of the body, so the Christ beheld is a Christ embodied in us; and we, gazing upon Him, are "changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Lord the Spirit."[1]

¶ It is a truism that we grow, slowly but surely, into the likeness of the people we admire and deliberately associate with. Even physical nearness seems to have the effect of making two people look alike, but those who are living in close spiritual fellowship cannot fail to grow in similarity of soul. And of course the stronger nature draws the weaker into ever closer touch with it. That is the reason why it is very important to be particular in one's choice of friends. As Moberley says, we gain unspeakably from friendship with those who are "exceptionally and conspicuously beautiful." One who lives continually in the sunshine of God's presence cannot fail to reflect as a mirror the glory of the Lord. To choose Christ as one's dearest Friend is to mould the whole life—not only consciously but unconsciously—into His image. The transformation is slow but sure; working, as every life does, from within outwards. No one can deliberately and consciously lean back on God for years, without being transformed by His Spirit. He pours love, joy and peace into a soul that is careful to keep the avenues of communication open. One who keeps in touch with God can go out into the world and inspire his fellows, for the very Life of God is pouring through him into them. No one can walk with God, eagerly and persistently, without helping others to see His face more clearly.

> We do not always know it when we have
> The privilege to be God's messengers,
> Nor who shall be His messengers to us.

Those who always see the King in His beauty of holiness cannot fail to gain some of His radiance, even as Moses came down with shining face from his long communion with God in the Mount.[2]

1. We are transformed *into the same image.* Same as what? Possibly the same as we behold; but more probably the phrase,

[1] A. Maclaren, *The God of the Amen*, 94.
[2] Dora Farncomb, *The Vision of His Face*, 47.

especially "image" in the singular, is employed to convey the thought of the blessed likeness of all who become perfectly like Him. As if he had said, "Various as we are in disposition and character, unlike in the histories of our lives, and all the influences that these have had upon us, differing in everything but the common relation to Jesus Christ, we are all growing like the same image, and we shall come to be perfectly like it, and yet each retain his own distinct individuality." "We being many are one, for we are all partakers of one." Perhaps, too, we may connect with this another idea which occurs more than once in St. Paul's Epistles. In the Epistle to the Ephesians, for instance, he says that the Christian ministry is to continue, till a certain point of progress has been reached, which he describes as our *all* coming to "*a perfect man.*" The whole of us together make a perfect man: the whole make one image. That is to say, the Apostle's idea perhaps is that it takes the aggregated perfectness of the whole Catholic Church, one throughout all ages, and containing a multitude that no man can number, to set forth worthily anything like a complete image of the fulness of Christ. No one man, even though he be raised to the highest pitch of perfection and his nature be widened out to perfect development, can be the full image of that definite sum of all beauty; but the whole of us taken together, with all the diversities of natural character retained and consecrated, being collectively His body which He vitalizes, may, on the whole, be not a quite inadequate representation of our perfect Lord.

Just as we set round a central light sparkling prisms, each of which catches the glow at its own angle, and flashes it back of its own colour, while the sovereign completeness of the perfect white radiance comes from the blending of all their separate rays, so they who stand round about the starry throne receive each the light in his own measure and manner, and give forth each a true and perfect, and altogether a complete, image of Him that enlightens them all, and is above them all.

¶ "When I was a little boy," says Pastor Chu, "I saw a funny little insect like a piece of stick. My mother told me this was a mingling (a kind of caterpillar), and that it never had young ones. When I asked my father how this could be, he told me that when it wanted a young one, it stood opposite a piece of stick and spoke

to it saying, 'You're like me, you're like me,' until finally little buds appeared and shaped themselves to arms and legs, and by-and-by the living insect stood before it. Of course, we know that this is a fable, made up by some one who saw a chrysalis or a mantis, but I will use it as an illustration. Here are we in the world, and Satan comes and stands opposite to us. 'You're like me, you're like me' he says to us, until—oh the shame and sorrow of it—we do grow like him by listening to him, and evil tempers bud forth and evil words and deeds, till we are very children of the devil. But, thank God, that is not all; for One comes down and stands opposite to us and He says 'Be like me, be like me,' until, thanks be to God, the evil tempers will fall away and holy tempers take their place; and by looking at Him we do grow like Him, changed from glory to glory into the same image."[1]

Madest Thou man in Thine own image, Lord?
How then has man defaced that work of Thine,
Until on that which Thy hand made so fair,
Thou lookest vainly for the marks divine?

Selfish and wayward, we have turned from Thee,
Albeit for Thyself Thou madest us—
Have fixed our thoughts and hopes on things below,
And lost the likeness to our Maker thus.

Yet Thou hast loved us with a love so strong—
Thou hast desired us, though we left Thy side,
That—changed, and marred, and sin-stained, as we are—
Apart from us Thou art not satisfied.

And Thou hast brought us to Thy feet again:
O now, at last, fulfil in us Thy plan!
Undone, and helpless, at Thy feet we pray,
Remake us, by our perfect fellow-Man![2]

2. The transformation is "from glory to glory." It is progressive. Holiness that is meant for such changing of the redeemed into the likeness of their Redeemer must be progressive rather than instantaneous.

It is as the leaven silently and gradually leavens the whole lump that the continual sight of a Saviour affects the entire

[1] *Chu and Lo, Two Chinese Pastors.*
[2] Edith H. Divall, *A Believer's Rest*, 74.

character. Sanctification is a gradual work: it is going on all through life: it is not done, at least ordinarily, by great leaps;—as it is insensibly that the character deteriorates in bad company; as it is by imperceptible degrees that the strength is diminished in a relaxing climate or increased in a bracing one; so it is by a process insensible but sure that always looking at our Saviour makes us grow like Him.

It is just the things which make the greatest change on us that work most imperceptibly. What a difference between the frail old man on the verge of the grave and the rosy little boy he used to be! And yet, though advancing hours made the difference, who could trace the change each hour made? And the influences which affect our character most are those which sink in, not those which come with a sudden shock.

¶ The Associate Presbytery, in the middle of the eighteenth century, appointed the Rev. Ebenezer and Ralph Erskine, and James Fisher to draw up a commentary on the Westminster Shorter Catechism, the explanations being in the form of questions and answers. A few of these may be quoted:—

"Why are the saints said to be built up in holiness?—Because the work of sanctification, like a building, is gradually carried on towards perfection at death.

"How doth the Spirit make the reading and preaching of the word an effectual means of building up the saints in holiness?—By giving them in the glass of the word such clear and repeated discoveries of the glory of Christ, as thereby they are more and more transformed into the same image with Him.

"How doth He by means of these ordinances build them up in comfort?—By conveying with power unto their souls the great and precious promises which contain all the grounds of real and lasting comfort.

"Through what instrument is it that the Spirit makes these means effectual for building up the saints in holiness and comfort?—It is through faith.

"What instrumentality has faith, in the hands of the Spirit, for building up the saints in holiness and comfort?—It rests upon God's faithful word for the promoting of both—'The Lord will perfect that which concerneth me.'"[1]

3. The transformation is not accomplished by beholding, but while we behold; it does not depend on the vividness with which

[1] D. C. A. Agnew.

we can imagine the past, but on the present power of Christ working in us. We are transformed "even as from (or by) the Lord the Spirit." The result is such as befits the operation of such a power. We are changed into the image of Him from whom it proceeds.

Left to ourselves, we might look at Christ for ever, yet never come to resemble Him at all. And we might even sincerely admire His character as a matter of sentiment without being drawn to imitate it. If we want to find perhaps the most eloquent panegyric that ever was spoken by uninspired lips upon the moral loveliness of our Saviour's character, we may find it in the writings of an avowed infidel, who utterly rejected Him. The sight of Christ draws all its efficacy to affect the character from the working of the Holy Ghost. *He* is the Sanctifier; the means of grace and holiness are nothing without Him. Where His presence was wanting, men have listened week by week to the faithful preaching of the Word; have read the Bible till every word of it was familiar; have seen, as far as the natural man can see, the glory of God made manifest in the Saviour; and the natural tear has sometimes started at the thought of Him who is fairer than the sons of men, and altogether lovely; but in a little time the impression wore away, and left the heart less likely to be impressed again. And it will be just so with us, unless we pray daily and earnestly for the presence in our hearts of the great Sanctifier, Enlightener, and Comforter.

Set even the life of Christ Himself in all its beauty before you as a monument of perfection erected in a distant past, and, while it may touch you with a moral suasion which is all its own, it will leave you still unlike it, battling with a weary sense of inability to do more than struggle to conform to what it was. But once realize that the "image" of Jesus is a personal life which may permeate your being with its present power, and the Spirit of Jesus will "quicken your mortal body," that you also may "walk in newness of life." John Smith, the Cambridge Platonist, has given memorable expression to this truth in these words: "God has provided the truth of Divine revelation. But besides this outward revelation, there is also an inward impression of it, which is in a more special manner attributed to God. God alone can so shine upon our glossy understandings as to beget in them

a picture of Himself, and turn the soul like wax or clay to the seal of His own light and love. He that made our souls in His own image and likeness can easily find a way into them. The Word that God speaks, having found a way into the soul, imprints itself there as with the point of a diamond." "God alone"; yes, God in His personal action upon our very selves, God in Christ dwelling "in the heart by faith," God by His Spirit strengthening us "with might in the inner man."

¶ William Denny was not a heretic, but neither was he orthodox. He attached little importance to dogma, and was accustomed to judge all things by moral tests. The spirit of Christ, not His metaphysical relation to Deity, was what he valued. The spirit of self-sacrifice was what he saw in the Cross, Christ teaching us to bear others' burdens. That spirit he believed to be Divine, and endeavoured to put in practice. Tested by the measure in which he made that spirit the law of his life, he was, I make bold to aver, one of the most Christlike men of this age.[1]

Too long have I, methought, with tearful eye,
Pored o'er this tangled work of mine, and mused
Above each stitch awry, and thread confused;
Now will I think on what in years gone by
I heard of them that weave rare tapestry
At royal looms, and how they constant use
To work on the rough side, and still peruse
The picture pattern set above them high:
So will I set my copy high above,
And gaze, and gaze till on my spirit flows
Its gracious impress, till some line of love
Transferred upon my canvas, faintly flows;
Nor look too much on warp or woof, provide
He whom I work for sees their fairer side![2]

[1] A. B. Bruce, *The Life of William Denny*, 478.
[2] Dora Greenwell.

# An Eternal Weight of Glory.

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## An Eternal Weight of Glory.

**For our light affliction, which is for the moment, worketh for us more and more exceedingly an eternal weight of glory.—2 Cor. iv. 17.**

George Herbert, in his *Country Parson*, describes this Epistle as "full of affections." Beyond any other of the Apostle's letters it lays bare the deepest feelings of that great heart, which has been keenly wounded by sufferings more acute than the trouble that came upon him in Asia and pressed him out of measure, beyond his strength, so that he had despaired even of life. Life is still his: but he has been made to feel, as he had not felt before, the pain which can be inflicted by coldness, suspiciousness, and something like hostility on the part of those towards whom, as he says, with touching emphasis, his heart has been habitually "enlarged." They have listened to malignant misconstructions, set afloat by those Judaizing teachers who made it their business to stamp out his work wherever Jewish Christians were to be found. It was bitter indeed for him who during a year and a half had been the guest of Justus, who had baptized Crispus and Gaius, and the household of Stephanas, to have to defend himself against the imputation of double-mindedness, of shifty diplomacy, and of what in modern phrase might be called priestcraft. It might well make him write warmly, and also mournfully. Much, he felt, was against him; he was hard put to it, "perplexed, cast down"; it was as if a "process of dying" had begun in him; his bodily health, continually impaired by the "thorn in the flesh," had been yet further affected by the mental distress of an intensely sensitive nature. But faith comes to his aid; "though the outward man be decaying, the inward man is daily renewing its strength"; the "momentary affliction seems light" after all, when he considers that it is producing, in a manner and to an extent surpassing all thought, "an eternal weight of glory"; and this comes home to him when he seriously contrasts "the things seen," as "temporal," with

"the things not seen" as "eternal," and, at that high standpoint of illuminated reason, looks resolutely away from the former to the latter.

¶ It is no mere poetical hyperbole which finds expression in such words as these:

> We live in thoughts, not breaths;
> In feelings, not in figures on a dial.
> We should count time by heart-throbs.

Or again,

> Our noisy years seem moments in the being
> Of the eternal Silence.

Who is there, indeed, whose familiar experience has not taught him, in some ways at least, the power of thought to master time, of feeling to lend wings to the leaden hours, or, what is relatively to us the same, to render us unconscious of their flight? Absorbing employment, intense excitements, critical emergencies, things and events that deeply affect or move us, often, as we all know, make hours to vanish unnoted and unmeasured, whole days to contract almost into the brevity of hours. When the flow of composition urges the writer's rapid pen, when the inspiration of a congenial subject kindles the artist's mind and lends deftness to his touch, when the orator is borne onwards on the swift tide of successful speech, when the trial is proceeding on whose issue life or death is suspended, when the decisive engagement, big with the fate of nations, is being lost or won—these, and such as these, are occasions on which time is not reckoned by physical measures, on which intensity of thought and feeling quickens the rate at which life moves.[1]

## I.

### The Weight of Affliction.

1. Afflictions never seem light to those who are called upon to bear them. By some remarkable condition of things, heavy afflictions may seem light and be accounted as nothing at all, but, naturally and by themselves, we always regard our own afflictions as heavy. It is very easy for spectators to say, when they hear another complaining of sufferings, "Oh! they are nothing at all, not worth a moment's attention"; and to be

[1] J. Caird, *University Sermons*, 361.

astonished that so much should be made of a little. But spectators of suffering may not be the best judges of its weight. In the first place it may be that they are not suffering themselves, and so look at things very comfortably. Then again, men differ as to their sensibility to pain. Circumstances which may be nearly unheeded by one who has but dull sensations may be agony to another more finely constituted. Or again, if both are sensitive, yet one may have a special wound or sore which the other is happily without, and then even the touch of a fly drives to madness. Therefore, when we see another in pain, it is not for us straightway to declare that there is nothing to be pained about. We are all better aware of the stress of our own sorrows than we are of those of other people, and the heart knoweth its own bitterness. Naturally we all feel our afflictions to be heavy.

St. Paul had his afflictions. He did not find the Christian life easy. He was speaking for himself and his companions when he said "We are troubled on every side," "perplexed," "persecuted," "cast down," "always delivered unto death." These are not rhetorical phrases which spring to the pen of an eloquent and ready writer. They are words which tell us of hard experiences, harsh treatment, real pain and suffering. In another part of this letter he tells us something more of what he had endured as a Christian. Five times he was beaten by the Jews, thrice by the Romans. (The strokes of the whip and the rods were not make-believe.) Once he was stoned, thrice he suffered shipwreck. Everywhere perils awaited him—perils of waters, perils of robbers, perils of the Jews, perils of the heathen, perils in the wilderness, perils in the city. He had endured weariness and painfulness, hunger and thirst, cold and nakedness.

2. How can afflictions, naturally heavy, come to be regarded as light? We know quite well that it is possible for the attention to be so occupied with one thing that it does not notice another. A man engaged in deep thought does not see the friend who recognizes him in the street. A philosopher like Newton may be so deeply involved in his problems as to forget the body and its want of food. In the excitement of battle men have not noticed the wound they have received, and not until they have begun to faint from loss of blood have they perceived what has

happened to them. A mind intensely occupied with one thing has little to bestow upon others. We cannot be alive with the same intensity all over. Great concentration of vitality at one point lessens it at others. So that the constitution of our nature points out the direction in which the answer to our question is to be sought. If there be something else of more importance than the pain upon which the attention can be fixed, then, for every degree of such attention there is a degree less of pain; with almost complete attention upon something else, the pain will very nearly disappear; until, by absorbing devotion to some great thing, it is possible for afflictions which naturally are heavy to become graciously light.

The vision of the unseen has this power. It interprets and transforms life. In this way "our light affliction, which is for the moment, worketh for us more and more exceedingly an eternal weight of glory." We are to get the clue to the mystery of life, we are to cease to be puzzled by the pain and suffering. The meaning and end of the seen are hidden in the unseen. To see with any clearness the end will help to interpret the ways by which it is reached. Light from the unseen will give an interpretative value to life and its trials, and with the vision will come the transformation. That which was a tangled puzzle will solve itself when viewed from a right standpoint. Now St. Paul was always a traveller through the seen to the unseen, where he found the Aladdin's lamp which revealed the meaning of his present affliction, which, though often sore, became "light," working not sores in him, but rather great glory. And so it is that here the mind of the Apostle is overwhelmed by the contrast between the seen and the unseen, and, as he rises in his flight of contemplation, the calamities of earth dwindle into insignificant smallness till there is nothing visible but glory.

Yet, strange to say, he describes the glory by an old earthly metaphor, by the very metaphor, indeed, which he used to apply to his afflictions; he calls it a weight. We speak of a weight of care, a weight of sorrow, a weight of anxiety; but a weight of glory!—surely that is a startling symbol. We do not think of a man as being crushed, overwhelmed, weighed down by glory. We should have thought that the old metaphor of care would be repulsive, that it would be cast off like a worn-out garment

and remembered no more for ever. But the old garment is not worn out when the glory comes, it is only transfigured; that which made our weight of care is that which makes our weight of glory. We need not a new object but a new light—to see by day what we have seen only in darkness.

¶ What is the use of all our reading and writing and speaking and thinking about God, and His love, and His care over us, if we are to see in an affliction nothing more than the distress which it brings? There is something else in the affliction besides this distress, and that something is God's love and eternal life. And the only use of all our reading, etc., is to fix our attention on this which is enclosed within the affliction, instead of having it engrossed by the envelope—the outward form in which God sends it.[1]

¶ If from the shores of eternity we cast back our gaze over the path we have travelled in this world, which regions will shine most brightly and beautifully in the view? Not, I think, those that have seemed to be joyous in the passing—not the years of youth and health and strength and earthly happiness—but much rather the spaces that here have seemed perhaps the darkest and dreariest; for these have drawn us nearer to God, these have been fullest of prayer, on these have fallen the purest, brightest rays from the Father of lights and from Him who is the brightness of that Father's glory and the Light of the World.[2]

## II.

### The Duration of Affliction.

1. Affliction is often life-long, as the Apostle well knew. Why then does he call it momentary? He compares it with what is unseen and eternal. He looks away from seen vicissitudes to unseen possessions. These vicissitudes may be manifold. They may be constant. There is the change from health to sickness. There is the change from wealth to poverty. There is the change from companionship to solitude. But let a man look away from them all, from the seen mutations to the unseen certitudes, and what then? Why, then he thinks of a place prepared where the inhabitant says no more, "I am sick"; of a treasure laid up

[1] *Letters of Thomas Erskine of Linlathen*, i. 246.

[2] Bishop Walsham How, *Pastor in Parochiâ*.

"where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal"; of a friendship that neither fails nor falters, but is always faithful, always sure, and always near. Who shall separate us from the love of God? Who shall exclude us from the grace of Christ? Who shall deprive us of the communion of the Holy Ghost? These form abiding realities, which the shocks of circumstance are as powerless to change as the rocking earthquake is to ruffle the pure blue sky, or disturb the solemn marching of its silent stars. So may we all, receiving a kingdom that cannot be moved, serve God acceptably and with godly fear.

2. Although St. Paul places the emphasis on the eternal, he does not despise the present. He was far too healthy-minded a man to rail at a summer day because it does not last, or to depreciate the beautiful home in which the great God has placed us here because this, some day, has to make way for another; he was far too human to depreciate friendship or love because there are partings and families are broken up. He was not so much absorbed in the thought of death as to forget the warmth, the majesty, and the mystery of being alive at all; and therefore those completely travesty St. Paul's philosophy of life who fix their eyes so exclusively on another world that they take no interest in this, or who are so absorbed in thinking of the God whom they have not seen that they have no eyes to see and care for the brother whom they have seen. No, he calls these things, not unimportant, but temporal. And what he means evidently is this: that underneath the seen and passing things, here and now and in our midst, is a world of unseen reality; that "heaven lies about us," not only, as the poet says, "in our infancy," but all our days; that these unseen realities make use of the seen, but exist independently of them; that it is possible as we walk the earth day by day to have our head above the mists in heaven; that our calling is to be eternal beings in a world of time, and that the real test of the use of life is what life leaves us when it has passed away.

¶ This valley [the Yosemite] is flanked by towering mountains, cleft for the most part right up in every variety of extraordinary summit. The rock is granite of flashing whiteness, rising into

triangles, squares and domes. The feature of the valley is two gigantic domes, the one split like the half of a helmet, the other running up in a mass of rock till an entire helmet crowns its mass. Yesterday I walked to the Mirror Lake on the one fork of the valley. The pines at first by their reflection almost absorbed the view; but when you look far enough down, in quite distinct perspective you see to almost infinite depths the outline of the rocks and of the sky. Thus the transient in the glass of time captivates many; we need to look deep enough to catch the eternal.[1]

## III.

### The End of Affliction.

1. Affliction is the precursor of glory. It cannot be said that trial and suffering in themselves have power to make men holier or more heavenly. Upon many they have the very opposite effect, making them gloomy, selfish, and envious. They harden the heart instead of making it tender and sympathetic. They may come and overwhelm a man in their dark waves, and yet when their tide recedes it may leave him impure and worldly as before. Let no one think, then, that he is necessarily the better for having been tried. It is not so; and yet it is true that trial is most generally the instrument which God employs for softening the hard-hearted, for subduing the proud, for teaching endurance and patience, for expanding the sympathies, for exercising the religious affections, for refining, strengthening, and elevating the entire disposition and character. You cast the ore into the furnace in order to obtain the pure gold unalloyed with any dross; so men must pass through those fires of affliction which try every man's work of what sort it is. "And no one," it has been observed, "who has borne suffering aright has ever complained that he had been called on to endure too much of it. On the contrary, all the noblest of our race have learned from experience to count suffering not an evil but a privilege, and to rejoice in it as working out in them, through its purifying and perfecting power, an eternal weight of glory." St. Paul had learned to "glory in tribulations also: knowing that tribulation worketh patience; and patience,

[1] *Life and Letters of John Cairns*, 697.

experience"; in other words, that the result of trial is, or ought to be, the discipline and enlargement of the spirit.

¶ A friend of mine, Mr. Houston of Johnstone Castle, died last week at the age of eighty-two, who had for fifty years suffered uninterruptedly from neuralgia. Many years ago he told me that for twenty years he had never been so sound asleep as to lose the consciousness of suffering. He died praising God for His tender mercies, which had led him all his journey through.[1]

2. Affliction "worketh for us more and more exceedingly an eternal weight of glory." More is said here than at first appears; more than the hasty reader would observe. It is not merely asserted that we shall be relieved of pain by-and-by; it is not merely stated that they who suffer here on earth shall cease to suffer in heaven; this were no new thing to tell. But what is said is this: that pain is the forerunner of joy, as its efficient cause. "Affliction" is not merely followed by "glory"; it "worketh" that glory, it maketh that glory to be. "Our light affliction worketh for us a weight of glory." This is a specific truth of Catholic Christianity, and one unknown to the wise and sagacious of this world.

There is nothing more characteristic of the scientific thought of to-day than the law of progress through struggle. Scientists show us that its working is found in every kingdom of the animate universe; that there is no progress apart from struggle and labour and suffering; and that in this conflict only the fittest survive, and by their survival raise their species to a higher plane. And this which philosophers of the nineteenth century claimed as the great discovery of their age is anticipated in these words of St. Paul. Our sufferings and struggles, if rightly used, lead to the development of our powers, and work for us a splendid result—the life of glory. He shows us that in this struggle alone is spiritual progress possible, and that the result of it is the survival of the fittest, of the saints, in the kingdom of glory.

¶ A bar of iron worth £1, when wrought into horse-shoes is worth £2. If made into needles it is worth £70. If into penknife blades it is worth £650. If into springs for watches it is worth £50,000. Thus the more it is hammered and pounded and polished, and brought through the fire, the more valuable it becomes. Does not this throw light upon many a perplexing provi-

[1] *Letters of Thomas Erskine of Linlathen*, ii. 144.

dence and many a crushing sorrow? The afflictions of this present time are preparing us for service here and for glory hereafter.[1]

Without, as I heard the wild winds roar,
And saw the black clouds their floods outpour,
As the lightnings flashed,
And the thunders crashed,
And the hurricane's force waxed more and more,
I said, as I looked from my window warm,
"Heav'n never on me send such a storm!"

Then came a dark day, when fierce and fast,
Down fell on my head the blinding blast!
Yet tho' sore assailed,
I nor shrank nor quailed,
For tho' loud the gale raged, as 'twould rage its last,
The struggle I waged, as I journeyed on,
Awoke in me powers before unknown!

I felt my hot blood a-tingling flow;
With thrill of the fight my soul did glow;
And when, braced and pure,
I emerged secure
From the strife that had tried my courage so,
I said, "Let Heav'n send me or sun or rain,
I'll never know flinching fear again!"[2]

3. It is Christ who makes affliction work out such glorious results. He has transformed pain and sorrow into beneficent angels. We cannot tell how it happened, but grief, through her acquaintanceship and familiarity with the Son of Man, became like a new creature; in her were seen a certain softness and pensiveness which she never had before; her form became altered and her footsteps light, until she seemed to take the air of a Sister of Mercy, and to breathe forth a wondrous benediction while she walked with Him. Doubtless it was His influence that worked the change; it was He who turned into a cross that scourge of small cords which she had carried from time immemorial, and gave to her eyes that tender look which seems to say, "I do not willingly afflict nor grieve you, O children of men."

[1] E. W. Moore, *Life Transfigured*, 122.
[2] T. Crawford, *Horae Serenae*, 17.

Thus they went through the world hand in hand, until He went out of it by the gate of the grave, tasting death for every man. And grief has been acting ever since as one of His ministers, and representing Him, and doing the works of mercy in His Kingdom. She has given to men in these latter days more than she ever took away; she is a dispenser and not a spoiler; her hands are full of goodly gifts, and though her discipline be painful, yet it is ever merciful, and as a gentle almoner she offers and bestows, wherever faith and love dispose the heart to receive them, sure and perfect pledges of eternal blessing and glory.

¶ I stand in one of our harbours, and see beyond its shelter the waves lift themselves mountains high; my ears are filled with the roar of the angry wind. Ignorant of vessels and of navigation, I observe a goodly ship putting forth to sea, and the conviction steals over me that she will be engulfed in the waters or cast by the wind upon the shore; but I do not know the power of the engines that propel the vessel or the skill of the captain who is in command of her. Did I realize these I should be assured that she would force her way through the waves, and in due time reach the desired port in safety. It is thus with the world. We see, we realize, the misery, the strife, the confusion that prevail; but we do not see, we cannot realize, the wisdom, the love, the power in the nature of Him who, in spite of all these, reigneth King for ever, or we should be assured that, though "the kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together, against the Lord, and against his anointed," yet "there is a river, the streams whereof shall make glad the city of God, the holy place of the tabernacles of the most High. God is in the midst of her; she shall not be moved. God shall help her, and that right early."[1]

¶ "Open the door and let in more of that music," the dying man said to his weeping son. Behmen was already hearing the harpers harping with their harps, he was already taking his part in the song they sing in Heaven "to him who loved them, and washed them from their sins in his own blood."

Some one will enter the pearly gate
By-and-by, by-and-by;
Taste of the glories that there await,
Shall you? Shall I?

If we are to be there, we must, like the saintly Behmen, "wash

[1] W. G. Horder.

our robes and make them white in the blood of the Lamb." Everlasting life begins on this side the grave, and our Heaven, like his, must begin on earth. The Life Eternal, the life in which time is as eternity and eternity as time, is the life hid with Christ in God. In the measure in which we experience it, we shall rise above earth's changing scenes. Our sorrows will not crush us; our successes will not elate us; our difficulties will not daunt us; death itself will not appal us, because, taught by the great Apostle, we are beginning to appraise the events of life at their true value, we are learning, through many a painful experience, slowly but surely to look "not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are unseen," and we find that the things which are unseen are eternal, for "Eternity is the Diamond in the Ring."[1]

Of fret, of dark, of thorn, of chill,
Complain no more; for these, O heart,
Direct the random of the will
As rhymes direct the rage of art.

The lute's fixt fret, that runs athwart
The strain and purpose of the string,
For governance and nice consort
Doth bar his wilful wavering.

The dark hath many dear avails;
The dark distils divinest dews;
The dark is rich with nightingales,
With dreams, and with the heavenly Muse.[2]

[1] E. W. Moore, *Life Transfigured*, 126. [2] Sidney Lanier.

# The Seen and the Unseen.

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## The Seen and the Unseen.

**The things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal.—2 Cor. iv. 18.**

The Apostle looked on the things that are temporal as not looking on them, but as looking straight through, on the thing eternal, which they represent and prepare. He looked on them just as a man looks on a window-pane, when he studies the landscape without. In one view he looks on the glass. In another he does not. Probably enough he does not so much as think of the medium interposed. Or, a better comparison still is the telescope; for the lenses of glass here interposed actually enable the spectator to see, and yet he does not so much as consider that he is looking on the lenses, or using them at all; he looks only on the stars. So also the Apostle looks not on the things that are temporal, even while admiring the display in them of God's invisible and eternal realities. He looks on them only as seeing through; uses them only as a medium of training, exercise, access to God. Their value to him is not in what they are but in what they signify.

¶ It is a true use of things temporal, that they are to put us under the constant all-dominating impression of things eternal. And we are to live in them, as in a transparency, looking through, every moment, and in all life's works and ways, acting through, into the grand reality-world of the life to come.[1]

¶ Crathie, 29th Oct. 1854.—This has been a heavenly day of beauty—the sky almost cloudless; the stones on the hill side so distinct that they might be counted; the Dee swinging past with its deep-toned murmur. I preached before the Queen and Royal Family without a note the same sermon I preached at Morven; and I never looked once at the royal seat, but solely at the congregation. I tried to forget the great ones I saw, and to remember the great Ones I saw not, and so I preached from my heart, and with as much freedom, really, as at a mission station.[2]

[1] Horace Bushnell.

[2] *Life of Norman Macleod*, ii. 38.

## I.

### The Seen is Girdled by the Unseen.

1. There are two worlds—the world of sense and the world of spirit; and the world of spirit surrounds, enspheres, and interpenetrates the world of sense. We speak as if the world of sense came first, and the world of spirit came after; whereas the truth is that the world of spirit is about us now, though the veil of sense hangs between. We imagine that we dwell in time here, and shall dwell in eternity hereafter; while the fact is, we dwell in eternity here, though we take a little section of it and call it time.

Each of these two worlds must be discerned by its own faculty. One is made up of places, people, circumstances, possessions—the physical; the other of ideas, feelings, affections, expectations—the spiritual. We are conscious of the house we live in, the faces that look at us, the tasks we do, the afflictions that befall us. We are conscious also of the sins that are past, of the love we have tasted, of the aims we cherish, of the sorrow that wounded our hearts. Both worlds surround us, one of them tangible like water, the other intangible like air. We see one with our eyes, we feel the other with our soul.

God keeps His holy mysteries
Just on the outside of man's dream,
In diapason slow we think,
To hear their pinions rise and sink
While they float pure beneath His eyes
Like swans adown a stream.

Things nameless, which in passing so,
Do touch us with a subtle grace,
We say, Who passes? They are dumb,
We cannot see them go or come;
Their touches fall, soft, cold as snow
Upon a blind man's face.

¶ It is a marvellous but familiar fact that, when an orchestra is playing, the ear of the listener can so concentrate itself upon one particular class of sounds in the united harmony—the note

of the clarionet, the note of the violoncello—as to hear that alone; the rest subordinate, if not all but extinguished. Mysterious truth, showing that even in the realm of physical nature we do not see with the eye only, or hear with the ear only, but with the brain, or something more spiritual still that lies behind eye and ear. And so it is, not less but more so, with the visions and melodies addressed to man's eternal part. We see what we wish to see among all the sights that tempt our souls; and we hear what we wish and set ourselves to hear. We can see only the temporal, if all we wish is to see the temporal; and we can see the eternal, if our desire is to see the eternal.[1]

2. Both worlds minister to us. If we were to track the first steps in the growth of a flower just emerging from the seed we should discover, upon the cracking open of the seed, that one minute vegetable fibre commences presently to be pressed thence away up through the overlying soil into the air and the light, and another vegetable thread begins, at the same time, to wind itself away down through the underlying soil into the ground beneath. If now we sink a single delicate thought into the botanical fact just stated, we shall see that that very process of groping up into the air of one part of its nature, and at the same time groping down into the deep places of the earth with the other part of its nature, is a statement in miniature, and a quiet prophecy, of the double affinity with which the plant is endowed, and the twin congeniality with which it has been by God made instinct.

Man similarly buds in two directions; he, too, is underlaid with a twin tendency. He is divinely endowed with one impulse that tends to push him out into the world, and into the association of things that lie easily in sight, and he is endowed also with a companion impulse that inclines to conduct him into the fellowship of things upon which the sun does not shine. But each, like the soil under the plant, offers to become to him the means of his life, and the material for his fixity, his power, and his hope.

¶ The idealizing of the outer world is one of God's ways of teaching us to see the beauty and fineness that lie hidden in the uncouth and rough and commonplace; the victory that waits our grasp within every difficulty. It spells out for us the great

[1] A. Ainger, *The Gospel and Human Life*, 161.

simple secret Paul had learned: while we look not at the things that are seen, but at the things that are not seen; for the things that are seen are often coarse and commonplace and are only for a passing hour; but the things that are not seen are full of beauty and power, and last for ever. The God-touched eye sees through fog and smoke to the unseen harbour beyond. It insists on steering steady and straight regardless of the storm overhead, and the rock or snag underneath. There is a victory in hiding in every knotty difficulty. Every trying circumstance contains a song of gladness waiting to be freed by our touch. Each disheartening condition can be made to grow roses.[1]

## II.

### The Seen Interprets the Unseen.

1. Only by looking at the things that are seen do we gain any idea of the unseen. "All visible things," said Carlyle, "are emblems. What thou seest is not there on its own account; strictly speaking, is not there at all. Matter exists only spiritually, and to represent some idea and body it forth." And so John Ruskin:—"The more I think of it, I find this conclusion more impressed upon me—that the greatest thing a human soul ever does in this world is to see something, and tell what it saw in a plain way. Hundreds of people can talk for one who can think; but thousands can think for one who can see. To see clearly is poetry, prophecy, and religion—all in one."

Nature is a mirror of the Unseen. The world around is an ever-present witness to us of the existence of things unseen. The world of Nature—that ever-changing world, the world of that which is ever being born out of the life of God, the world in which we may look upon ever-new manifestations of the great life of the Divine One—that itself is an ever-present token of a Presence Divine. The Sacramentalism of Nature—for such is the name we may give to this great principle—is presenting itself to the minds of men with increasing vividness. "The things that are made" are being more and more discerned as suggestive to the human mind of thoughts respecting "the invisible things of God."

[1] S. D. Gordon, *Quiet Talks on Home Ideals*, 17.

These thoughts are presenting themselves only to reverent and loving souls.

When love interprets what the eye discerns,
When mind discovers what is really meant,
When grace improves what man from Nature learns,
Each sight and sound becomes a sacrament.

¶ There is an experience which I remember well. The time was evening, the scene a valley in a foreign land. The crystalline sky stretched above, lit by the summer moon; the wide, still lake spread beneath, surrounded by the summer woods; not a cloud in the air; not a rustle in the leaves; not a ripple to stir the glassy expanse or break the reflection of the tiny church where it glimmered on its birchen knoll—the whole such a picture of perfect, ethereal, and dreamlike rest that it seemed ready to pass off into spirit before one's very gaze. It was an hour when talk about common things was hushed, and the thoughts went back to the distant and banished. "What a beautiful sky!" said one of the company. "Yes," was the sudden reply of another, whose words breathed the longing of these lone mountain lands, yet fitted themselves to the mood of us all,—"yes, if we could only see behind." So near may Nature bring us to the heart and the secret of things! So clear are her tokens! So thin is her veil! The spell of the eternal lies upon her. The mystery of the eternal breathes through her. Thanks to faith, we may pass beyond, and, entering through the outer curtain, gaze, and wonder, and worship in the inner shrine![1]

The world is round me with its heat,
And toil, and cares that tire;
I cannot with my feeble feet
Climb after my desire.

But, on the lap of lands unseen,
Within a secret zone,
There shine diviner gold and green
Than man has ever known.

And where the silver waters sing,
Down hushed and holy dells,
The flower of a celestial spring—
A tenfold splendour dwells.

[1] W. A. Gray, *Laws and Landmarks of the Spiritual Life*, 20.

Yea, in my dream of fall and brook
By far sweet forests furled,
I see that light for which I look
In vain through all the world.

The glory of a larger sky,
On slopes of hills sublime,
That speak with God and Morning, high
Above the ways of Time![1]

2. It is the unseen things that give meaning to the things which are seen. A man who studies the universe without his thought outrunning his eye, and his heart distancing his thought, is like a child who fumbles over the letters in his primer without drawing an idea from the word in which the letters meet or an inspiration from the sentence in which the words combine. The body takes its beauty from the invisible spirit that is sheathed in its features of expression and organs of action. The single life gains meaning and becomes worth living because of the subtle threads by which it is bound into the general life and the silken meshes that make it part of the fabric universal. This earth of ours is interesting because inaudible messages flash between it and the farthest star, and because it moves in rhythmic tread with all the flashing host that throng the ethereal plain. History first draws to itself our interested regard because it bends upon an invisible axis, and because its events are spelling out in ever-lengthening lines the wisdom, power, and tenderness of God. Each smallest thing everywhere and always wins character and grace from the ties that relate it to the distant and unsounded, as the bay is tremulous with the tide that throbs out in the bosom of the sea.

¶ There is a remarkable passage in Prince Bismarck's *Conversations* where he attributes the steadfastness of the German soldiers in the ranks to the deeply-rooted belief in God as ordering duty. But the virtue of heroes or saints or martyrs transcends this. What is its ultimate justification? How is it defensible that a man should lay down his life for duty, if the law of duty is relative only to this present life? I do not see a fair escape from this dilemma. Either life is the highest prize that a man possesses, or there is something beyond and above this

[1] H. C. Kendall, *Songs from the Mountains.*

present life, and, if so, something which belongs to the world of things unseen. But the Christian martyr lays down his life, and lays it down rationally, because in his eyes duty receives its justification not in this world but in the world for which he looks. Hence, self-sacrifice never seems to him a failure. He that loses his life shall save it. There is no possibility of a final antinomy between the law of duty and the law of interest. God has eternity in which to work out His purposes; and here on earth we touch but the hem of His great providence. The rest is faith. "What I do thou knowest not now; but thou shalt know hereafter." But if this present life is all complete in itself, then we stand face to face with moral contradictions. Virtue does not always succeed. Vice triumphs. It is not always best to do our duty. The poet of to-day, in the new *Locksley Hall*, has seen with the eye of genius that to deny the eternity of the moral law is to deny the moral law itself—

Truth for truth, and good for good! The Good, the True, the Pure, the Just;
Take the charm "For ever" from them, and they crumble into dust.[1]

3. Jesus Christ is the clearest evidence as well as the fullest interpretation of the unseen. It was not possible for the Jewish race of that day by any principle of evolution to have produced Him. He came from elsewhere. No one has ever lived after His fashion, with such becoming perfection. He belonged to elsewhere. Death did not bury His life; it remains unto this day the chief moral energy in the world. While He moved among men He suggested that other world where the hopeless ideals of this life are fulfilled. His biography breaks the bonds of sight; it lays the foundation for faith.

¶ Years ago the English Academy and the French Salôn contained at the same time two pictures which, if they had been painted for the purpose, could not have been a more perfect illustration of St. Paul's great utterance. In one the king is lying on his bed the moment after death—he was the mightiest monarch of his day—and the sceptre has just dropped from his hands. And behold, the servants who an hour ago trembled at his look are rifling his treasury and dividing his possessions. Below with fine irony was written the title, "William the Conqueror"—his conquests had ceased. In the other, a man is lying

[1] J. E. C. Welldon, *The Spiritual Life*, 61.

in a rocky tomb; His conflict is over, and His enemies have won. He denied the world, and the world crucified Him; He trusted in God, and God left Him to the cross. But love has wrapped His body in spices, and given Him a new tomb amid the flowers of the garden; love is waiting till the day breaks to do Him kindness. The Angels of God and not the Roman soldiers are keeping guard over Him while He takes His rest, after life's travail. When the day begins to break, He will rise conqueror over death and hell—Lord both of this poor world which passeth away, and of the riches of the world which remaineth for ever.[1]

## III.

### The Seen is the Shadow, the Unseen the Substance.

1. All the deeper realities of life are conveyed to us by intimation rather than by demonstration. They come to us by other roads than those of the senses. The persons to whom we are bound in the sweetest relationships or by the noblest compulsion are never really seen by us. We see and touch their garments; we never see or touch them. They may live with us in the closest intimacy, and yet no sense of ours ever made a path of final approach between us. When they vanish out of life, they leave behind them all that we ever saw or touched; but how pathetically unavailing is the appeal of the heart to the garment laid aside in the haste or pain of the final flight! All we ever saw is there, and yet it is nothing! That which we loved, and which made the world dear and familiar through the diffusion of its own purity and sweetness, we never saw or touched. It was never within the reach of our senses; it was accessible only to our spirits. So sacred was it that the final mystery was never dissipated; so Divine was it that the final veil was never lifted. One came our way and dwelt with us in a tabernacle of flesh, even as Christ did, and then departed, leaving behind all that we ever saw or touched, and yet taking with her all that was real, companionable, comprehensible. And yet with this constant and familiar illustration of the presence of a reality which we never touch or see under our roof and by our side, we reject the intimations that come to us from every quarter and bring us the truths by which we live.

[1] J. Watson, *The Inspiration of our Faith*, 358.

2. The eternal persists in spite of outward changes. There is always a continuity in the midst of change, always something eternal rising out of decay, always something immortal to rebuke our mortal fears; there is a human love in us that never dies; there are hopes that never perish; there is a growth that never ceases; there are good thoughts that never leave us; there are joys which no man can take away; there is something always beyond that we are drawn to; there is something out of sight, to which we are always stretching our unsatisfied and aching hands. The body pants for a deliverance which lies beyond; the soul hungers for a larger portion than it has ever known; the whole of our nature cries out for that future which is still unrevealed. And God has written eternity in the hidden heart of all things, not to mock us with vain dreams, but to make us certain that there is a happier and nobler life behind the veil.

3. Let us make the most of the seen by living in the unseen. The statement of the Apostle implies, with reference to "the things which are not seen," much more than a mere conviction of their existence, however lively and sincere. It implies also an earnest and steadfast contemplation of them—a turning of the thoughts to them, a fixing of the affections on them, and a bending of our aims and efforts to the attainment of them. The word here translated "look at" is in other passages translated by the expressions "take heed," "mark," "consider," or "observe attentively," and sometimes it means to aim at or to pursue. Indeed, as has been observed, our English word "scope" is derived from it, which signifies the general drift or purpose of a man's conduct —the mark he aims at, or the end he has in view. When Christians, therefore, are said to "look at the things which are not seen," the meaning evidently is, that they look at these things with earnest attention, with eager desire, with steady contemplation, as the marksman looks at the target which he seeks to hit, or the racer looks at the goal which he is striving to reach.

¶ During the greater part of his illness he would have chosen to live, and he was hopeful, as we were hopeful, until within a few days of the last. Then he became glad to go. Though devoted doctors and nurses did all that skill and care could do, the walls of the Dwelling-House of that ardent spirit grew thin and

more thin. One morning he beckoned to us to come nearer, and he tried to put into words a state of vision he had been in when he appeared to be neither sleeping nor waking. He had looked into the Book of Creation, and understood that the whole could be comprehended—made plain from that other point of view which was not our earthly one. "A glorious state," he called it, and we looked on the face of one who had at last seen "true being" when he said, "Now I see that great Book—I see that great Light."[1]

¶ I remember standing once on a high Swiss pass, the ledge of a perpendicular precipice, where I waited for the morning view. There was nothing as I gazed ahead but mist—mist puffing, circling, swirling, like steam from the depths of some tremendous caldron. But I watched, and there was a break for a moment far down to the left, and a flash of emerald green; it was meadow-land. Then there was a break to the right, and a cluster of houses appeared, with a white church steeple you could almost have hit with a well-aimed stone. Then they were covered, and the mist hid the scene as before, till it parted again, this time in front; and there was blue sky, and against the blue sky a vision of glittering snow peaks. So it went on, peep after peep, rift after rift, here a little and there a little, till at last, as if worked on unseen pulleys the mist curtain slowly drew up, and from east even unto west there stretched the chain of the Italian Alps, sun-smitten, glorious, white as no fuller on earth could white them. Have your faces to the sunrise. Be ye children of the dawn. Then "though the vision tarry, wait for it; because it will surely come, it will not tarry." Though the revelation be fragmentary here, it will be perfect hereafter. Now we see through the mists darkly, then, when the mists have vanished, face to face, with the eyes that are purged by God's Spirit, in the light that streams from His throne.[2]

[1] Mrs. Watts, in *George Frederic Watts*, ii. 323.

[2] W. A. Gray, *Laws and Landmarks of the Spiritual Life*, 22.

# Walking by Faith.

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## Walking by Faith.

**For we walk by faith, not by sight.—2 Cor. v. 7.**

1. St. Paul describes the mood in which, possessed of the Christian hope, he confronts all the conditions of the present and the alternatives of the future. We are of good courage at all times, he says. We know that while we are at home in the body we are away from home as far as the Lord is concerned—at a distance from Him. This does not mean that fellowship is broken, or that the soul is separated from the love of Christ; it means only that earth is not heaven, and that St. Paul is painfully conscious of the fact. This is what is proved by ver. 7: We are absent from the Lord, our true home, for in this world we are walking through the realm of faith, not through that of actual appearance. There is a world, a mode of existence, to which St. Paul looks forward, which is one of actual appearance, he will be in Christ's presence there, and see Him face to face. But the world through which his course lies meanwhile is not that world of immediate presence and manifestation; on the contrary, it is a world of faith, which realizes that future world of manifestation only by a strong spiritual conviction; it is through a faith-land that St. Paul's journey leads him. All along the way his faith keeps him in good heart; nay, when he thinks of all that it ensures, of all that is guaranteed by the Spirit, he is willing rather to be absent from the body, and to be at home with the Lord.

For, ah! the Master is so fair
  His smile so sweet on banished men,
That they who meet it unaware
  Can never turn to earth again;
And they who see Him risen afar,
  At God's right hand to welcome them,
Forgetful stand of home and land,
  Desiring fair Jerusalem.

¶ St. Paul stood between two worlds; he felt the whole attraction of both; in the earnest of the Spirit he knew that he had an inheritance there as well as here. It is this consciousness of the dimensions of life that makes him so immensely interesting; he never wrote a dull word; his soul was stirred incessantly by impulses from earth and from heaven, swept by breezes from the dark and troubled sea of man's life, touched by inspirations from the radiant heights where Christ dwelt. We do not need to be afraid of the reproach of "other-worldliness" if we seek to live in this same spirit; the reproach is as false as it is threadbare. It would be an incalculable gain if we could recover the primitive hope in something like its primitive strength. It would not make us false to our duties in the world, but it would give us the victory over the world.[1]

**2.** Two kinds of walking are here contrasted. "We walk not by sight." How then? "We walk by faith." St. Paul speaks of life not as the three score years and ten, with all its natural divisions of childhood, youth, manhood, and old age, and all its circumstantial divisions of education and profession, prosperity and adversity, happiness and bereavement, concerning which as going home a good man says, "God shall be my guide through it unto death." He speaks of life as a succession of days, each with its morning and its evening, each with its little detail of thought and speech and feeling and action; and he says that there are two ways of living such a life. We may believe what we see, or we may see what we believe. We may walk, that is live, by faith in the unseen, or we may walk by sight, by what we see and taste and handle. We may take the next step in trust or we may refuse to take it until we see what it is.

¶ We never know what lies before us. Sorrow may be waiting, or sore temptation, or death. We see not a step before our feet. But no matter, if God is leading; for He knows all that lies before us. A young man had almost decided to become a Christian. But one doubt held him back; he did not see how he could continue faithful all through his life. He spent an evening with his minister, and they talked long on the subject. Still his fears and his indecision remained. As he left, the pastor observed how dark it was, and getting a lantern handed it to the young man, saying, "This little light will not show at once the whole way to your home, but only one step at a time; yet take that

[1] J. Denney, *The Second Epistle to the Corinthians*, 183.

step, and you will reach home in safety." As the young man walked homeward he pondered, "Why can I not trust my Heavenly Father, even if I can't see my way clear to the end, if He gives me light for one step?" Only as we go on, step by step, does God disclose to us His will and plan for our life. Thus the joys of life do not dazzle us, for our hearts have been chastened to receive them. The sorrows do not overwhelm us, because each one brings its own special comfort with it. But, if we had known in advance of the coming joys and prosperities, the exultation might have made us heedless of duty and of danger. We might have let go God's hand and grown self-confident, thus missing the benediction that comes only to simple, trusting faith. If we had known of the struggles and trials before us, we might have become disheartened, thus failing of courage to endure. In either case we could not have borne the revealing, and it was in tenderness that the Master withheld it.[1]

I do not ask, O Lord, that Thou shouldst shed
Full radiance here:
Give but a ray of peace, that I may tread
Without a fear.

I do not ask my cross to understand,
My way to see;
Better in darkness just to feel Thy hand,
And follow Thee.[2]

## I.

### Not by Sight.

1. *There is a sense in which no man walks by sight.*—"We walk not by sight." The exact expression, as given in the margin, is "by means of an appearance," that is, a shape and form visible to the senses. It is evident, though not always pondered as it should be, that no man really walks by sight. To do this would cut him off from life, the whole world of the past, the whole world of the future, and more than half the world of the present. A man who consistently carried through the endeavour to walk by sight would discard history as fable; would neither sow his field nor educate his children; would count feeling fancy and affection folly; would

[1] J. R. Miller. [2] Adelaide A. Procter.

reduce himself to, and therefore below, the level of the beasts that perish; and long before he reached the practical goal of his theory, he would find himself the inmate of a prison or an asylum, to be a standing witness to the world which looks on, that the gospel has reason on its side, as well as religion, when it says, "Walk not by sight, walk by faith."

There are, however, approaches to the walking by sight to which all men are liable. A man walks by sight who makes Mammon his god; lives for getting and hoarding, or else for spending and squandering; estimates worth by wealth, and will count himself a happy man if he can but die rich. A man walks by sight who cannot control appetite or passion, cannot put aside the thing good for food or pleasant to the eyes even for the sake of avoiding to-morrow's sickness or this night's remorse, or a life's disgrace; finds himself again and again yielding to a temptation which he has suffered from or prayed against; weakly lives and miserably dies the slave of a sin which his better nature condemns and despises, but to which this body of flesh and blood, made his tyrant by long yielding to it, ties and binds him.

It may not be equally evident, but it is true, that another class of faults is traceable to the same cause. A man walks by sight who, under the influence of the subtle impersonal presence which we call the world, allows himself to echo the language, to court the applause, to live for the admiration of other people; losing all the independence and all the manliness of his personal being as it is lived in God's sight here and as he must give account of it to Him hereafter. Thus, not only covetousness or self-indulgence in the lowest sense of the word, but vanity and worldliness and vulgar ambition, all have their root in the walking by sight which St. Paul here disclaims and repudiates for the Christian.

¶ Is it not mad folly always to be craving for things which can never quiet our longings, much less satisfy them? No matter how many such things one has, he is always lusting after what he has not; never at peace, he sighs for new possessions. Discontented, he spends himself in fruitless toil, and finds only weariness in the evanescent and unreal pleasures of the world. In his greediness, he counts all that he has clutched as nothing in comparison with what is beyond his grasp, and loses all pleasure in his actual possessions by longing after what he has not, yet

covets. No man can ever hope to own all things. Even the little one does possess is got only with toil, and is held in fear; since each is certain to lose what he hath when God's day, appointed though unrevealed, shall come. But the perverted will struggles towards the ultimate good by devious ways, yearning after satisfaction, yet led astray by vanity and deceived by wickedness. Ah, if you wish to attain to the consummation of all desire, so that nothing unfulfilled will be left, why weary yourself with fruitless efforts, running hither and thither, only to die long before the goal is reached?

It is so that these impious ones wander in a circle, longing after something to gratify their yearnings, yet madly rejecting that which alone can bring them to their desired end, not by exhaustion but by attainment. And if their utmost longing were realized so that they should have all the world for their own, yet without possessing Him who is the Author of all being, then the same law of their desire would make them contemn what they had, and restlessly seek Him whom they still lacked, that is God Himself. Rest is in Him alone. Man knows no peace in the world; but he has no disturbance when he is with God. And so the soul says with confidence, "Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire beside thee. God is the strength of my heart and my portion for ever."[1]

2. *There is a special sense in which the Christian walks not by sight.*—St. Paul had a particular thought in his mind when he wrote these words. The statement for which the text gives the reason is this: "Whilst we are at home in the body, we are absent from the Lord; *for we walk by faith, not by sight.*" And this accounts for the peculiarity of the expression—not by the help of visible shape or form. The word for "sight" is rare. It is used in Scripture by St. Luke in the narrative of our Lord's baptism: "The Holy Spirit descended in bodily shape like a dove upon him"; and once again by St. John in his fifth chapter: "Ye have neither heard the Father's voice at any time, nor seen his shape." It is remarkable, therefore, that to each one of the Persons of the Holy Trinity—the Father, the Son, and the Spirit—this same word is once applied in Holy Scripture; for what St. Paul says here he says of our Lord Jesus Christ: "We walk not by the help of seeing His shape or form visibly, but by the help of the spiritual sight of Him, which is the grace of faith." He

[1] St. Bernard of Clairvaux, *On Loving God.*

contrasts the present condition of the Christian who has to live the daily life by seeing the invisible with two other experiences—one past, one future—each of which may be called walking by sight.

The disciples walked by sight during the earthly ministry of the Saviour. They lived the daily life during those three wonderful years by the help of visible shape and form. "While I was with them in the world," He says Himself in the great prayer, "I kept them in thy name." The personal influence, the ascendancy of perfect goodness, the motive of reverential love, something more powerful still, mysteriously hinted in His own saying: "The Spirit dwelleth with you, and shall be in you," secured their walk during those years at least from levity, passion, or sin, though it very imperfectly enlightened their understanding, and left them liable to the first gust of temptation the moment it was withdrawn. Still, to walk by sight, when that sight was the sight of Jesus Christ, was a wonderful privilege while it could be theirs. St. Paul himself had never known this kind of life. He was not one of the Twelve. His sight of Christ had been but for a moment, though it left an indelible impression upon his life. When he said, "We walk not by sight," he probably had in his mind a walk not past, done with, but a walk future, and not yet possible. The passage in which the text is embedded is a passage of expectation. He is reconciling himself and his readers to a present condition of pilgrimage and homelessness by the prospect of a beautiful and magnificent change. He seems to say in the text, "We walk not yet, but we shall walk, by sight."

¶ To credit ordinary and visible objects is not faith, but persuasion. Some believe the better for seeing Christ's sepulchre; and when they have seen the Red Sea doubt not of the miracle. Now contrarily, I bless myself, and am thankful, that I lived not in the days of miracles: that I never saw Christ and His disciples. I would not have been one of those Israelites that passed the Red Sea; nor one of Christ's patients on whom He wrought His wonders: then had my faith been thrust upon me; nor should I enjoy that greater blessing being pronounced to all that believe and saw not. 'Tis an easy and necessary belief, to credit what our eye and sense hath examined. I believe He was dead, and buried, and rose again; and desire to see Him in His glory, rather than to contemplate Him in His cenotaph or sepulchre. Nor is this much to believe: as we have reason, we owe this faith unto

history: they only had the advantage of a bold and noble faith who lived before His Coming, who, upon obscure prophecies and mystical types, could raise a belief, and expect apparent impossibilities.[1]

## II.

### By Faith.

1. *There is a sense in which every man walks by faith.*—As there is a sense in which no man, absolutely no man, walks or can walk by sight, so there is a sense in which every man walks and must walk by faith. In making faith everything in the Christian life, our Lord merely elevated and illuminated a natural principle into that which is above nature. Every man who is not a fool or a madman, in some sense, walks and must walk by faith. The monstrous and shameful avowal, "I believe in nothing that I do not see," though it has been made before now on an infidel platform, is the mere babbling of idiocy. The rough seaman who once answered the saying on the instant by the question, "Don't you believe in the wind?" caught the point of the fallacy and saved philosophy and theology the trouble of a reply. Every investment of the money hoarded, every engagement of the worldling, every project of the sensualist, is made on the faith of a to-morrow. Each one of these, in a miserable way, walks by faith. But, as before, in speaking of sight, so now again of faith, we may notice approaches and approximations, however far they may be from an attainment. A man walks by faith in proportion as he lives above sense. A man who in any degree controls appetite, keeps under his body, lives soberly and chastely, whatever the motive, so far walks by faith. A man who refuses to judge the world's judgment, forms his own opinion and holds to it, expresses an independent mind upon things right and wrong in private or public, more or less certainly walks by faith in doing so. A man who studies deeply, who dwells much in philosophy and history, keeps company with the great minds and souls of the past, has a real sympathy with beautiful thoughts of the dead as well as of the living, walks by faith in a more definite, because a positive and not a negative, way; not leaving vacant, if that were possible, the space redeemed from the sensual and the sensible,

[1] Sir Thomas Browne, *Religio Medici*, sec. 9.

but filling and peopling it with forms and substances having an inherent worth and virtue. Such a man is a living witness to a world out of sight, a world as real and a thousand times as permanent as the visible. So far he is on the side of Christ and the gospel, for he avows the reality of a world unseen.

Bring it down to our own common life. What supreme issues we decide in faith! The battle is risked on the testimony of a single spy. We entrust ourselves on the great pathless ocean, because we have faith in the man at the wheel and in the man who is on the outlook at the masthead. Think of life without the element of faith and trust—fathers without faith in wives and mothers; brothers and sisters without mutual faith. It would mean that there could be no such thing as love, for love always presupposes implicit faith. We actually measure the character of men by the quality of their faith. We see a man who believes in goodness, and we say: He is a good man. He suspects and doubts the goodness of his fellows; we suspect and doubt him. Is it not clear that faith is not an experience relating to religion alone? It is no strange peculiar thing superimposed on man by priests and preachers, but the very principle by which we live from day to day.

I love to see my children trustful
  Of the best things from my hand;
Never doubting me, nor curious
  All to know and understand.

For trust is nobler far than knowledge,
  Faith than sight, a hundredfold:
One the coward shows, the other
  Both for good and ill makes bold.

And so 'tis sure the Heavenly Father,
  Who His children's welfare plans
With a changeless love, and wisdom
  More consummate far than man's,

Rejoices most in those who trust Him,
  Leaning simply on His love,
These His best things here discover,
  And will win the best above.[1]

2. *There is a special sense in which the Christian walks by faith.* — St. Paul was not thinking of a world of poetry or history or

[1] T. Crawford, *Horae Serenae*, 61.

philosophy, when he wrote the words, "We walk by faith." St. Paul's world out of sight was not a world of magnitude or multitude, of beauty as such, or of wonder as such, or of power or wisdom or charity in the abstract. For him the invisible was a Person, the combination and concentration of the great and good, the true and the beautiful in whom are all things, and we in Him.

The Christian's activities and serviceableness are from one side perfectly natural, as he lives in true contact with the waking realities of human life. But from another side they are supernatural all the while, for the regenerate man is supernaturally conditioned and related. He is joined to Him who is invisible, and the union has to do with his whole being. He lives his life in the flesh by faith in the Son of God, who loved him and gave Himself for him. He perseveres as seeing Him whom yet he has not seen, but whom he shall yet see as He is. He thinks so highly of the present because of the eternal, to which it is as the seed-grain is to the summer harvest.

So the Christian walks by faith. Take out of his walk his faith, which is the very antithesis to credulity, and the difference for him will be practical indeed. Into the now formless void will disappear not only the fair idea of the things unseen, but the very substance, the very essence, of the noblest motive to the willing service of man on earth, and to a reverent jealousy over the duties of to-day. We walk by faith. And such a life is the one life fully worth living. Such a walk is the one walk that moves in true liberty along true certainty, making for a real goal.

¶ Faith is a certitude without proofs. Being a certitude, it is an energetic principle of action. Being without proof, it is the contrary of science. Hence its two aspects and its two effects. Is its point of departure intelligence? No, thought may shake or strengthen faith; it cannot produce it. Is its origin in the will? No, good-will may favour it, ill-will may hinder it, but no one believes by will, and faith is not a duty. Faith is a sentiment, for it is a hope; it is an instinct, for it precedes all outward instruction. The need of faith never leaves us. It is the postulate of a higher truth which is to bring all things into harmony. It is the stimulus of research; it holds out to us the reward, it points us to the goal.[1]

[1] *Amiel's Journal* (trans. by Mrs. Humphry Ward), 192.

¶ That which in lifeless things ennobles them by seeming to indicate life, ennobles higher creatures by indicating the exaltation of their earthly vitality into a Divine vitality; and raising the life of sense into the life of faith: faith, whether we receive it in the sense of adherence to resolution, obedience to law, regardfulness of promise, in which from all time it has been the test, as the shield, of the true being and life of man; or in the still higher sense of trustfulness in the presence, kindness, and word of God, in which form it has been exhibited under the Christian dispensation. For whether, in one or other form,—whether the faithfulness of men whose path is chosen and portion fixed, in the following and receiving of that path and portion, as in the Thermopylæ camp; or the happier faithfulness of children in the good giving of their Father, and of subjects in the conduct of their King, as in the "Stand still and see the salvation of God" of the Red Sea shore, there is rest and peacefulness, the "standing still," in both, the quietness of action determined, of spirit unalarmed, of expectation unimpatient: beautiful even when based only, as of old, on the self-command and self-possession, the persistent dignity or the uncalculating love, of the creature; but more beautiful yet when the rest is one of humility instead of pride, and the trust no more in the resolution we have taken, but in the hand we hold.[1]

## III.

### The Superiority of Faith over Sight.

1. Walking by faith *we are better able to appreciate Christ's power.*—We have a juster conception of Christ's power, its spiritual nature, its universality, its unfailing energy, than His contemporaries could have had. To us He is no mere wonder-working magician, but the wielder of that spiritual force which still raises the dead soul to life, gives strength to the palsied will, and casts out the unclean spirit; the power which is made perfect in weakness, and which is able to use the foolish things of this world to confound the wise. Not even the disciples could, during our Lord's lifetime on earth, have understood Christ's power as we understand it.

¶ A poor boy lay dying. The night I saw him was cold and gloomy without, the house within was small and poor. On that

[1] Ruskin, *Modern Painters*, ii. (*Works*, iv. 116).

bed he had lain for months without a murmur, suffering severe bodily pain. Around him were signs of blood as if he lay wounded on a battle-field. From that pale face, lighted up only by blue eyes serene and quiet, I heard these words the night his spirit met his Saviour, and they were worthy of the greatest warrior, "I am strong in Him." Yes, child, stronger than all the fleets and armies of Europe.[1]

2. *We are better able to appreciate Christ's love.*—His contemporaries saw that the Lord was loving; but they naturally read into His life the limitations of which they were conscious in their own, and did not realize the universality of His love. They expected it to be limited by racial antipathies. "How is it that thou, being a Jew, askest drink of me, which am a woman of Samaria," said the stranger to Him at the well of Sychar. They expected that He would shrink back from contact with sinners. "This man, if he were a prophet, would have known who and what manner of woman this is that toucheth him." His contemporaries could not so denude themselves of their ordinary conceptions of humanity as to realize that the love of Jesus transcended all human limits, embraced every member of our race, and yearned with special earnestness over the prodigal and the lost. But we, who have never known Christ after the flesh, have some glimpse of the breadth and length and depth and height of that love of Christ which passeth knowledge.

Again, as regards that supreme instance of His love, the offering of Himself for the sins of the world—what was it to those who saw it, to John and Mary, and to those who "stood afar off beholding"? What were the struggling thoughts to which that spectacle gave rise? That He was innocent, that He, the most loving of men, was suffering the cruellest of deaths, that history was repeating itself, and the Jews were slaying their greatest and best, that they themselves were losing their friend, their spiritual helper, so that henceforth life would be dark and sad to them. But how little did they realize that that crucifixion was the great crisis in the world's history, yes, and the great crisis, too, in the history of every individual soul. How little did they realize then the meaning of His own words, "I, if I be lifted up, will draw all men unto me." How little did they know that

[1] Norman Macleod, *Love the Fulfilling of the Law*, 24.

that was a voluntary offering of the God-man, who gave Himself for the life of the world. Afterwards, it is true, they learnt all this; but, remember, they were taught it not by sight, but by faith, and faith alone can draw the inspiring doctrine from love, that whosoever abideth in love abideth in God and God in him.

¶ You cannot see Christ, but you believe that He is true, loving, faithful, touched with sympathy when you suffer; that He knows all about you, and loves you with a love personal, deep, tender, strong, everlasting. You know, too, that He has all power, and that all His power is yours to support, keep, bless, deliver, protect, save you. You know that He has all wisdom—wisdom that never errs, that never counsels rashly, indiscreetly, short-sightedly—and that all this wisdom is for the guidance of your life, the ordering of your steps. As we think along these lines the unseen Christ becomes very real to us.[1]

3. *We are better able to realize the abiding presence of Christ.*—This was the lesson the Lord was teaching His followers during the forty days. To those who had known Him by sight, He had appeared as bound by the limits of space and time. But the forty days gave the disciples wider views. What would be the effect of His appearing suddenly, when least expected, now in Galilee, now in Jerusalem; revealing Himself to them now as they sit in the room with closed doors, now as they take their evening walk, now as they cast their nets in the Galilean lake? Must not the belief have sprung up in them that their Master might at any moment grow into sight out of the empty space—that, in fact, seen or not seen, He was always beside them, viewing their every action and hearing their every word? His Ascension has made that belief the property of all His followers. The Christian is never troubled now with the thought that Christ cannot be in two places at once. Simultaneously, it may be, to those who lie dying in some far-off battle-field, to those who cling to wrecks in lonely seas, to the mother who sits bereaved beside her dead child, the presence of the Lord is vouchsafed. They realize that He is there, and are calmed and comforted. It is only through His Ascension that the promise has been made good, "Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world."

[1] J. R. Miller.

¶ That heroic and saintly missionary, James Gilmour of Mongolia, was one of those whose sense of the abiding presence of Christ was always vivid and supporting. "No one," he writes, "who does not go away, leaving all and going alone can feel the force of the promise 'Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world,' and when I begin to feel my heart threatening to go down, I betake myself to this companionship, and, thank God, I have felt the blessedness of this promise rushing over me repeatedly when I knelt down and spoke to Jesus as a present companion from whom I am sure to find sympathy."

## IV.

### One Day we shall Walk by Sight.

Here and now, while we are at home in the body and absent from the Lord, "we walk by faith, not by sight." Therefore, by the implication of the whole surrounding thought, when we leave home in the body and get home to the Lord, we walk by sight, and not by faith. "Blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed"; yes, for they, as they step out of this life, shall see indeed. True, there will be there, and for ever, occasion enough for an immortal exercise of faith. That world, let us be abundantly assured, will have its mysteries as well as this; its calls to the blessed to confide, to rely, as they worship before the throne. But the conditions will be gloriously altered. It will be a faith exercised under sight. It will be the confidence we feel in some immeasurably wiser friend while he carries out his plans in our presence, and our eyes are all the while upon his face, as against the sometimes trying efforts of a confidence in him exercised at a distance from him, and in spite of false rumours of his death, and amidst a thousand accusations and misrepresentations of his purposes and his actions.

¶ Death, for the believer, for the follower of Jesus Christ, will be to go to Him, to see Him. We shall walk, amidst the trees of that deathless and sinless Paradise, by sight, not by faith. The disciplinary strain, having done its work, will cease. The rest, the sabbatism, having come to its season, will begin, and grow, and bear its fruit of bliss, and knowledge, and endless readiness for the exercise of the powers of the resurrection, in the vernal

sunshine of that Sight, that *eidos*, that most blessed and most beautifying "Object Visible."[1]

¶ The hope of hopes, the promise of promises, the joy of joys, the crown of crowns, is being with Christ, where He is, that we may see His glory. If Christians in their daily lives, and useful activities, and frequent sorrows would but take this more to heart, how different their whole lives would be, in their level of attainment and in their interpretation of circumstances! Life is beautiful and desirable, chiefly on account of what it leads to and educates us for. But what will it be, when we see God face to face, in the sinless, tearless land? Only let Christ be King in our hearts, and our true satisfaction and consolation about everything; the Friend on whom we lean without knowing it; the Master from whom we take our orders, and who has given each of us our task to do. When that is done, He will send for us. Then surely we should have an unspeakable rest flowing into us: we should cease to fear circumstances, we should only fear to miss using and interpreting them properly. We should be always hoping, with a hope that never makes ashamed; and our joy no man would take away.[2]

[1] Bishop H. C. G. Moule, *Christ is All*, 93.

[2] Bishop Thorold, *Questions of Faith and Duty*.

# The Constraint of Love.

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## The Constraint of Love.

**For the love of Christ constraineth us; because we thus judge, that one died for all, therefore all died; and he died for all, that they which live should no longer live unto themselves, but unto him who for their sakes died and rose again.—2 Cor. v. 14, 15.**

This is the great Apostle's triumphant answer to his accusers. The First Epistle to the Corinthians had only fomented the Judaistic elements in the already faction-torn church at Corinth, until, at the date of this Epistle, they were clamorously challenging the authority of St. Paul and the truth of the doctrines he was preaching. More persons than St. Paul have found that it is not easy to maintain one's equanimity under unjust criticism, especially when the aspersions relate to the fondest attachment and the supreme ambition of life. Such an ordeal reveals the man, and in its fierce light graces or defects stand forth in sharpest outline. If St. Paul never appeared more human, neither was he ever more manifestly great, than when pouring out his mighty heart in these rushing sentences, often made obscure by their very intensity. Is St. Paul ambitious? Does he desire by talking about bonds and imprisonments, or dreams and revelations, to exalt himself above his brethren? Does he wish by his unsparing anti-Judaism, by ideal demands on the Christian life, to make himself the judge of conscience and the infallible interpretation of the Divine mind? Or has he gone quite beyond himself and is he mad? All this—and much more—his enemies openly charge. To one and all his answer is: "The love of Christ constraineth us."

If we connect this assertion with the words which immediately precede it—"Whether we be beside ourselves, it is to God; or whether we be sober, it is for your cause"—we shall see that not only his great heroic deeds, but his common acts and judgments, were moulded by the same power. He had defended himself so vehemently against the great public charges which had been brought against his character that to the refined and self-contained Corinthians he appeared "beside himself"; but he affirms that

burning torrent of defence was not for self-interest, but for God; because the love of Christ constrained him. There had been charges too subtle and shadowy for public defences to remove, and these this man of vehemence had calmly lived down; but he declares that this meek endurance sprang not from his self-control, but from the love of Christ which constrained him. If, then, not only his grander deeds but his daily acts and judgments were thus inspired, these words express a power which was acting intensely on Paul's whole nature, and which made his silence and vehemence, his love and suffering, one living language, by which the constraining love of Christ strove to utter its burning energy.

## I.

### The Test of Life is found in its Motive.

1. The life of an intelligent being must be under the sway of some chosen and cherished motive. High degrees of intelligence find their expression in the careful selection of the motive. Where the intelligence is low and untrained, we find men blindly obeying motives which the accident of the hour may have raised up, or to which the bodily passions may excite. We can look into the face of no fellow-man and say, "That man is living without a motive." The consideration of the motives that actually rule men's lives gives us very sad thoughts of our humanity. They range between the animal and the Divine, but they belong for the most part to the lower levels. The entire aspect and character of a man's life may be changed by a change of his motives. A new and nobler motive will soon make a man a better man. No man ever did rise to do noble things while his motive concerned only self and self-interests. All noble lives have been spent in service to others. All the best lives in private spheres have been self-denying lives. All the heroic lives in public spheres have been the lives of patriots, the lives of the generous, the pitying, and the helpful.

¶ Humanity does not need morals, it needs motives; it is sick of speculation, it longs for action. Men see their duty in every land and age with exasperating clearness. We know not how to do

it. The religion which inspires men with a genuine passion for holiness and a constraining motive of service will last. It has solved the problem of spiritual motion.[1]

(1) Many people have no higher motive than the *hope of reward and the fear of punishment.*—Hope and fear are among the most powerful feelings of our nature ; and, acting in opposite directions as they generally do, they lead to a behaviour in which the influence of both is to be seen, like those compound motions, the result of equal and opposing mechanical forces. How much do we do from the hope of reward! How much do we not do from the dread of punishment! How steadily are we thus preserved in the straight path of duty from the pressure on the one side and the other of these two powers!

The statute-book does not simply say, like the Decalogue, "Thou shalt not steal"; it says, "If you do steal, the detective will deliver you to the judge, and the judge to the jailer, and he will cast you into prison, and you shall not get out thence till you have paid the forfeit of your crime." We know that if we rob our neighbour's house, or assault our neighbour's person, or slander our neighbour's good name, or in any other way disturb the peace of society and violate the letter of the law, we must pay the penalty. The fear thus inspired operates like a charm. It pervades the whole mass of society: though unseen it is felt; and even when scarcely consciously felt, its influence is active, like some of those subtle agencies in the atmosphere that surrounds us, which tell upon our happiness, our health, and our life, though we are altogether unaware of their existence. It makes the thief honest, the slanderer silent, the turbulent peaceful. We are virtuous by compulsion. We do good because we dare not do evil.

But even in this motive there lies an element of truth. There is at least the recognition of righteousness in the earth. And when we have done evil we recognize the justice of the punishment which overtakes us.

> Mourner that dost deserve thy mournfulness,
> Call thyself punished, call the earth thy hell;
> Say, "God is angry, and I earned it well—

[1] **John Watson,** *The Mind of the Master*, 180.

I would not have Him smile on wickedness":
Say this, and straightway all thy grief grows less:—
"God rules at least, I find as prophets tell,
And proves it in this prison!"—then thy cell
Smiles with an unsuspected loveliness.

"A prison—and yet from door and window-bar
I catch a thousand breaths of His sweet air!
Even to me His days and nights are fair!
He shows me many a flower and many a star!
And though I mourn and He is very far,
He does not kill the hope that reaches there!"[1]

(2) A higher motive is found in the *sense of duty*.—There is something in us which recognizes moral obligation, and impels us to take a line of conduct which, perhaps, we have no natural inclination to follow. Now, we can all of us see that, when we come to speak of duty, we have risen into a higher region of thought. And yet the purest motive of life is not conscience. That is what the Puritans built on. There was very little love in the Puritan theology, very little exposition of the love of God, very little *manifestation* of love in the household (there was love, but it was concealed, not manifested), very little preaching of love in the pulpit. The great power that bound Puritanism together was the power of conscience. That was the power of Judaism. There was love in Judaism, but not much. The real power of Judaism was an awakened conscience. The school of Ethical Culture is a survival of Puritanism, as Puritanism was a survival of Judaism. In them conscience is the key-note. Judaism, Puritanism, and Ethical Culture are incarnate conscience. Christianity is incarnate love. A man may conform to law because it is righteous law; but he cannot love the law. We cannot love an abstraction. We cannot love a thing. There must be some heart, some power to love in return, in that which we love. We can love only a person. Christianity comes, and it shows in the heart of history this Divine Person, and says to us, "Love for Him—that is to be the constraining power, the motive power, the secret of your life."

¶ There is no disguising it that law, fate, destiny, or commandment may produce an exceedingly noble form of religion;

[1] George MacDonald, *Poetical Works*, ii. 248.

that it may make a nation strong in law, and powerful in all things; but it tends always to produce a character that is hard and cold; noble, but ungenial, ungracious. Yet the result of a clear understanding of law, and a very clear obedience to it, is never in any way to be accounted cheap. For it is better to be ungracious and obedient than to be gracious without obedience. It is better to be moral and undevout than to be devout and immoral. It is better to have your strength, even though clothed in raggedness as to beauty, than to have a sensuous beauty upon inward deformity and untruth.[1]

¶ In actual practice the theory that lays the emphasis upon duty, as opposed to inclination, contains an important element of truth, which naturalistic theories of the end of action have always tended to overlook. For it is undoubtedly true that at a certain stage in moral development, both in the individual and in the race the negative or ascetic element is the prominent one. All moral progress consists in subordination of lower to higher impulses, and at a certain stage it may be more important to conquer the lower than to give effect to the higher. How far it is possible to effect this conquest without appeal to higher and more positive principles of action—how far, for instance, sensual impulses can be made to yield before the abstract announcements of reason that they are "wrong," without assignment of further reason or without appeal to the higher interests and affections — is a question for the educator. What is certain is that morality begins in self-restraint and self-denial, and that it is impossible to conceive of circumstances in which this negative element will be totally absent from it. Whatever we are to say of the desire to enjoy pleasure, it is certain that readiness to suffer pain is an element in all virtue, and that there is more danger for the individual in indulging the former than in over-cultivating the latter.[2]

## II.

### The Sovereign Motive is Born at the Cross.

1. The Apostle does not mean, as at a first glance we might suppose, his own affection for Christ, his own devotion to Christ. This affection, this devotion, was indeed a constraining power. But it was only second in the chain of causes and consequences. It was not the source and origin of his energy. The source must

[1] George Dawson. [2] J. H. Muirhead, *The Elements of Ethics*, 128.

be sought farther back than this. The source must be sought outside himself. The source must be found in God, not in man. Not his love for Christ, but Christ's love for him, for others, for all mankind, for a world steeped in ignorance and sin and misery—this was the prime cause of all his moral activity, the paramount motive which started and directed all the energies of this most magnificent of all magnificent lives. His own love for Christ was only the response, only the sequel—as he himself would have confessed, the necessary, the inevitable sequel—to Christ's love for him once impressed upon his being. Christ first loved him, and he (how could he help himself?) was fain to love Christ. It was not he, St. Paul, that lived any longer; it was Christ that lived in him. It was not he, St. Paul, that planned, that felt, that toiled, that suffered for Christ, that traversed the world with his life in his hand for Christ, that was instant in season and out of season for Christ, that died daily for Christ; but it was Christ's own love fermenting like leaven in his inmost being, stirring and animating his sluggishness. This unspeakable love rises up before him, as the one great fact which will not be thrust aside, the one clear voice which will not be silenced. It haunts him sleeping and waking. It occupies the whole background of his thoughts. Forget it? How can he forget it? Others may forget, but he can never forget.

Many Christian men endeavour to rouse themselves into energy by the strength of their own devotion. Their glance is perpetually on themselves, and they try to work from their own feelings of consecration to the Lord; hence their energy is fitful, and depends upon excitements. At one time they are filled with ardour, and at another cold in gloom. When their love is deep, then are they strong; when it is feeble, they endeavour to awaken it by spasmodic effort and self-condemnation; and as their vows of devotion fade and fail, they sink either into a morbid gloom that withers their energy, or into a calm self-contentment that lulls them in a spiritual dream. A feeling we possess is ever feeble and liable to change; a feeling possessing us is strong and enduring. This love surrounding and resting on a man, takes him out of himself, and becomes a permanent influence, not diminishing in temptation, or lessening by change of circumstances. It is, then, a love in Christ inspiring man—rendering him its instrument,

making his life its language, changing not with his changes, but acting with eternal charm on his spirit—this is the power to which our text refers.

2. The supreme proof of Christ's love was His death on the cross. "He died for all." The death of Christ for all—which is equivalent to the death of Christ for each—is the great solvent by which the love of God melts men's hearts and is the great proof that Jesus Christ loves each one of us. If we strike out that conception we have struck out from Christianity the vindication of the belief that Christ loves the world. The basis of Christ's authority, and the vital centre of all His power over men's hearts by which He transforms lives, and lifts those which are embedded in selfishness up to wondrous heights of self-denial, is to be found in the fact that He died on the cross for each of us. As a matter of fact, those types of Christian teaching which have failed to hold the sacrificial death of Jesus Christ as the centre of His work, and have brought Him down to the level of a man, have failed to kindle any warmth of affection for Him. A Christ who did not love me when He was upon earth, and who does not love me now that He is gone up on high, is not a Christ whom I can be called upon to love. And a Christ that did not die for me on the cross is not a Christ who has either the right or the power to rule my life.

We must accept that full-toned teaching if we are to solve the riddle of the power which the Man of Nazareth has over the world. Unless He was the Son of God, and therefore loving us each, as only a Divine heart can love; unless He was the Sacrifice for sin, and therefore rendering up Himself unto the death for each of us, there is nothing in Him that will absolutely sway hearts and perfectly ennoble lives. The cross, interpreted as St. Paul interpreted it, is the secret of all His power, and if once Christian teachers and Christian churches fail to grasp it as St. Paul did their strength is departed.

¶ "Few men in these days," he once said to me, "have done so much for the religious life of Scotland as James Morison. The pendulum of human thought is ever swinging to the extreme points: he found it at the extreme point of God's sovereignty, and brought it to the other extreme—man's responsibility; but the truth lies where these two meet"; and, crossing his arms, he

made the sacred sign, as, in a voice of singular depth and persuasiveness, he said—"All truth centres in the Cross of Christ."[1]

3. The love of Christ manifested on the cross stirs love in us. The Redeemer's love is a fire of live coals, which ever burns on the altar of His own compassionate heart. But the human heart is as an unkindled piece of coal, hard, cold and dark. It never can of itself either kindle itself or catch the fire of Divine love to do so. It can never, therefore, change its coldness and darkness into warmth and brightness; nevertheless, if a live coal from the altar of celestial love touch and catch hold of it, it is speedily transformed, its blackness into brightness, its coldness into radiating heat, and its hardness into yielding softness. It is similar, when the love of Christ catches and kindles with its heavenly flame the human heart. It transforms the soul into which it enters, so that its spiritual darkness is replaced by spiritual brightness, its hardness becomes softness and sensibility, its coldness a fountain of warmth, glowing and scintillating with true Christian feeling. In fact the heart and life is transformed by the entrance of the love of Christ, and becomes instinct with His love. A new energy or force has been created in it which is similar to, but feebler than, the love which kindled it.

¶ It was about three weeks before his end, whilst confined to his room for a few days by an attack of feverish illness, to which, especially when in anxiety, he had always from time to time been liable, that he called Mrs. Arnold to his bed-side, and expressed to her how, within the last few days, he seemed to have "felt quite a rush of love in his heart towards God and Christ"; and how he hoped that all this might make him more gentle and tender, and that he might not soon lose the impression thus made upon him; adding that, as a help to keeping it alive, he intended to write something in the evenings before he retired to rest.[2]

Lord, hast Thou so loved us, and will not we
  Love Thee with heart and mind and strength and soul,
  Desiring Thee beyond our glorious goal,
Beyond the heaven of heavens desiring Thee?
Each saint, all saints cry out: Yea me, yea me,

[1] A. Guthrie, *Robertson of Irvine*, 63.

[2] A. P. Stanley, *The Life and Correspondence of Thomas Arnold*, ii. 321.

Thou hast desired beyond an aureole,
Beyond Thy many Crowns, beyond the whole
Ninety and nine unwandering family.
Souls in green pastures of the watered land,
Faint pilgrim souls wayfaring thro' the sand,
Abide with Thee and in Thee are at rest:
Yet evermore, kind Lord, renew Thy quest
After new wanderers; such as once Thy Hand
Gathered, Thy Shoulders bore, Thy Heart caressed.[1]

4. The impulse that comes from the cross is sustained by the convictions of an enlightened judgment. "The love of Christ constraineth us; because we thus judge, that one died for all." The love of Christ is a principle which operates, and can operate, only for reasons shown. It calls into exercise our judging faculty. So far from dealing exclusively with the feelings, it requires us to think. In this manner is its motive power maintained, just as in the case of the engine by whose nice and measured play the huge vessel is propelled against wind and tide. To one who has never witnessed the results of steam-power, such a sight is quite a marvel. "How can it be?" he asks. "How such power?" You tell him of the expansive power of steam. "But what is steam?" he asks; "and where is it generated?" You take him on board, and descend with him into the vessel. You show him the huge boilers, and the great furnaces beneath, and the heaps of fuel with which the fires are fed. Only then his wonder ceases. And what constitutes the fuel of the fire which underlies, so to speak, the visible play of the Christian propelling power? The Holy Spirit, it must always be allowed, is the source of all spiritual processes. He is the Inspirer of Christian love. He fans the hidden flame, and keeps up the glow. At the same time, He employs means; and the means which the Spirit usually employs for maintaining the influence of the love of Christ up to the constraining point is this—*judging* concerning the grand comprehensive fact that "Christ died for us." The facts of Calvary constitute, as it were, the fuel which feeds the sacred fire, whereby is maintained the power of spiritual propulsion; and by the earnest, prayerful, and persistent exercise of all our faculties—our thinking, reasoning,

[1] Christina G. Rossetti, *Verses*, 34.

judging, determining faculty — upon these Calvary-facts, we bring, as it were, fresh supplies of fuel in order that with them we may feed the fire of Christian exercise and action.

¶ My apprehension of the love of Christ must come in between its manifestation and its power to grip, to restrain, to impel me. If I may use such a figure, He stands, as it were, bugle in hand, and blows the sweet strains that are meant to set the echoes flying. But the rock must receive the impact of the vibrations ere it can throw back the thinned echo of the music. Love, in like manner, must be believed and known ere it can be responded to.[1]

¶ In the convent of San Marco in Florence, in cell after cell there are depicted upon the walls the scenes of the crucifixion of Jesus by the brush of that poet-painter-preacher, Fra Angelico. The painter has seemed to feel that the figure of Jesus crucified was more than he could compass; he has left it most conventionally treated. All the depth of his power he has put into the figure of St. Dominic, who stands at the cross representing the Christian soul in all the various phases of feeling which pass over it, as it contemplates the spectacle of Jesus crucified. First, there is the mere bewilderment, as of one who contemplates a sight shocking and horrible, and he hides his face in horror, as from something disgraceful. You pass into another cell, and the scene is changed. Now he is looking up in questioning bewilderment; he has not yet taken in the meaning of the scene, but he is sure that there are hidden there depths of misery and truth. You pass to another cell, and now he has understood what it is. He has seen in Jesus One who is suffering for human sin; he is determined that he will not share those sins, he feels there a penitence which is represented by the scourge at the foot of the cross. You pass into another, and now he has found the joy and repose of that forgiveness which passeth out of the loving heart of Christ. He kneels there, he contemplates in ecstasy Jesus who has forgiven him. Once more. Alone he is standing, with his arms outstretched, as one who simply contemplates in admiration the glory of that great love for all the world which beams from the cross. Once more, he is kneeling there, kneeling on one knee, as one who had prepared to start up; he is there half in homage, half in recognition that this cross lays upon his life the allegiance of a great service; he is grasping it as one who is just leaving for his mission.[2]

[1] A. Maclaren. [2] Bishop Gore.

## III.

### The Power of the Cross Constrains to Unselfish Service.

"The love of Christ," says the Apostle, using a highly forcible expression, "constraineth us." The corresponding word in the original primarily signifies to "shut up" or to "compress," as by some coercive power which cannot be withstood; and in its secondary sense it means to "impel," to "bear away," or to "hurry onwards," as if by the force of some rapid and impetuous torrent. As employed in the text, it intimates that the love of Christ exerts somewhat of this mighty and well-nigh irresistible influence on His people as often as it takes full possession of their souls, captivating their every thought, engaging their every affection, shutting them closely up, or hemming them completely in, so that only one line of conduct can be adopted by them—urging all their energies into action, bearing them on in the face of every obstacle, and leaving them no alternative but to obey its dictates.

1. The first great effect of Christ's love is to *change the centre of life.*—All love derives its power to elevate, refine, beautify, ennoble, conquer, from the fact that, in a lower degree, all love makes the beloved and not the self the centre. Hence the mother's self-sacrifice, hence the sweet reciprocity of wedded life, hence everything in humanity that is noble and good. Love is the antagonist of selfishness and the highest type of love should be, and in the measure in which we are under the influence of Christ's love will be, the self-surrendering life of a Christian man. The one power that rescues a man from the tyranny of living for self, which is the mother of all sin and ignobleness, is when a man can say, "Christ is my aim," "Christ is my object." There is no secret of self-annihilation, which is self-transfiguration and, I was going to say, deification, like that of loving Christ with all my heart because He has loved me so.

¶ Keith Falconer, that noble young man who died in Arabia in starting a mission among the Mahommedans, said, "Let people call you eccentric. Eccentric means nothing more than out of centre, and if you have got a new centre in God of course you are out of the old centre of the world. Let the world's machinery

move round the old centre. You have begun to move by that eccentric movement about quite another pivot than that around which the world moves."[1]

¶ A comet—these vagrants of the skies—has liberty to roam, and what does it make of it? It plunges away out into depths of darkness and infernos of ice and cold. But if it came within the attraction of some great blazing sun, and subsided into a planet, it would have lost nothing of its true liberty, and would move in music and light around the source of blessedness and life. And so you and I, as long as we make ourselves the "sinful centres of our rebel powers," so long do we subject ourselves to alterations of temperature almost too great to bear. Let us come back to the light, and move round the Christ; satellites of that Sun, and therefore illumined by His light and warmed by His life-producing heat.[2]

2. Next, the dynamic of the cross becomes *the inspiration of a sacrificial life.*—"One died for all, therefore all died; and he died for all, that they which live should no longer live unto themselves, but unto him who for their sakes died and rose again." The idea here expressed is a favourite one with the Apostle. Often he speaks of Christians as "dead with Christ," as "made conformable to his death," as "planted together in the likeness of his death." And in one very striking passage in particular, which occurs in the second chapter of the Epistle to the Galatians, at the twentieth verse, he thus writes: "I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me." In this striking passage the very same idea is expressed in nearly the same language as in the text, namely, that, in the practical judgment of the faithful Christian, his own life, as to all selfish purposes, is held by him to have expired upon his Saviour's cross, so that in his prevailing disposition he is now dead to everything that interferes with his devotedness to the Son of God, who gave Himself for him. So closely does his fate unite him to the Saviour that he views himself as having fellowship with that Saviour alike in His crucifixion and in His resurrection, and "reckons himself" to be "dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ." He lives no more himself, but Christ liveth in him; the whole

[1] J. K. Maclean, *Dr. Pierson and his Message*, 278. [2] A. Maclaren.

life which he now leads, as a Christian, being one of conformity to the example, and subserviency to the will of Christ.

He dwelt within the wilderness
Disdaining Mammon's lure:
He walked among the thorns of pain,
And yet His step was sure.

He saw the vine-deck't homes of men,
And gazed with quiet eyes;
He turned away: "Not here," He said,
"Is found My Paradise."

He saw the gilded chariots pass,
The conqueror's array:
They held to Him a laurel crown,
And still He turned away.

Back to the wilderness He went
Without a thought of loss:
He hewed out of the wood two beams
And made Himself a Cross.

"If I would save them I must die!"
(This was the thing He said);
"Perchance the hearts that hate Me now
Will learn to love Me dead."

He died upon the Cross He made,
Without a lip to bless:
He rose into a million hearts,
And this was His success.[1]

3. It is a *glad ministry.*—For the yoke of Christ is not a despotic constraint, like the law with its "shalt" and "shalt not," spoken in thunder from Sinai: not an unreasonable constraint, like that of self and Satan, chaining men to compliances which they know to be unlawful and fatal to truth and peace; not an arbitrary constraint, like the shifting fashions of this vain world, which men follow blindly about, not knowing whither they may lead them. It is none of these; its law is generated in the soul itself, and in its best and highest portion. Its cord that binds

[1] W. J. Dawson, *The Book of Courage*, 26.

men is woven out of the noblest of human motives—faith, gratitude, adoration. "The Son of God loved me"—this is its first principle, graven deeply on the heart. This is no vague admiration of His love; this goes beyond the orator and the poet; this is the guilty sinner grasping his Saviour, the drowning mariner reaching at his plank; a fact not only consented to by the understanding, not only uttered by the lips, not only overflowing at the fountain of tears, but fixed in the central depths of the personal being, resident, and paramount, in the council chamber of the heart. "The Son of God loved me." Am I convinced of this? Then He is bound to me, and I to Him; wherever He is, there am I; wherever I am, there is He.

¶ When the long absent sun once more revisits the Polar seas, and the weary adventurer, close captive of the cold, with his bark anchored to an ice-floe, becomes conscious of the universal thaw, and feels himself borne outward by the resistless pressure of the liberated waters; right joyously does he loose his moorings and commit himself to the gladsome flush, and steers full gallantly through the melting masses which are speeding southward with himself. Thus eagerly does the soul, long frozen up in selfishness, obey the mighty influence of the Sun of Righteousness, and surrender itself to the outflow of the love of Christ. "For the love of Christ constraineth us."[1]

[1] B. Gregory, *Sermons, Addresses and Pastoral Letters*, 198.

# In Christ a New Creation.

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## In Christ a New Creation.

Wherefore if any man is in Christ, there is a new creation (R.V.marg.).—2 Cor. v. 17.

1. The word "wherefore," with which the text begins, shows us that the words stand in close connexion with what precedes them, and that, in order to understand their meaning, we must know what is the argument that leads up to them. The Apostle has been dealing with one of his favourite themes—the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, and he has been arguing, as he often does, that that death upon the cross was not an end in itself, but the necessary step towards the resurrection, and that the new life which was manifested in that wonderful victory over the grave, was to be imparted to all who, through faith in Him, partook in the same experience. But, to the mind of St. Paul, this did not only mean that literal death was to be succeeded by a literal resurrection; it meant that, here and now, in the life men live in the flesh, the whole drama of the cross and of the open grave was destined to be re-enacted, and that a death to sin might mean for any man who sought it a resurrection to righteousness. For the Apostle one great effect of the resurrection of Christ was that it set free in the world a new and hitherto undreamed-of power, the power whereby, if belief made a man one with Christ, the greatest marvel might be accomplished, and all that man's past be forgotten in a new and wonderfully altered present. And so he reaches the words we have here to consider, in which he terms such a change nothing less than a "new creation."

2. A word on the translation. In the Authorized Version we read "If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature"; and the Revisers have retained this rendering. But they give the literal translation in their margin—"there is a new creation." That is, if any man is in Christ, a new creation is the result; a creation

not less perfect or majestic than that which the prophet announces, "Behold, I create new heavens and a new earth"; or than that which Christ Himself proclaims, when it is said that "He that sat upon the throne said, Behold, I make all things new." Thus in the case of the man that is in Christ Jesus, there is "a new creation,"—a new creation within, a new creation without,—a new creation already in part accomplished, but waiting its blessed consummation when the great Creator returns in glory to complete His handiwork within and without, in soul and in body, in heaven and in earth.

First then let us see what is meant by being "in Christ"; then let us look at the new creation which the man in Christ discovers within him, and finally at the new creation which he finds all around him.

## I.

### In Christ.

No words of Scripture, if we except these: "God manifest in the flesh," hold within themselves a deeper mystery than this simple formula of the Christian life, "in Christ." Indeed, God's taking upon Himself humanity, and yet remaining God, is hardly more inexplicable to human thought than man's becoming a "partaker of the divine nature," and yet remaining man. Both are of those secret things which belong wholly unto God. Yet, great as is the mystery of these words, they are the key to the whole system of doctrinal mysteries. Like the famous Rosetta stone, itself a partial hieroglyph, and thereby furnishing the long-sought clue to the Egyptian hieroglyphics, these words, by their very mystery, unlock all mysteries of the Divine life, letting us into secrets that were "hidden from ages and from generations."

The words "in Christ" or "in Jesus Christ" occur fifty-five times in the New Testament. Fifty-four of these occasions are in the Epistles of the Apostle Paul; the fifty-fifth is in a benediction in the First Epistle of St. Peter, which is clearly influenced by St. Paul's custom. These figures are not to be dismissed as mere statistics. If a straw shows which way the wind blows, statistics

of this kind may show the channels of thought in which the Apostle's mind most often ran. They show the Apostle as the founder of Christianity as a working, worshipping religion, built on the foundation of Jesus Christ. If we can follow St. Paul in his use of a phrase which recurs whenever he is dealing with the heart of his faith, the idea which was in his mind will take shape in ours, and we shall have a clue to what the Apostle meant when he went about Asia and Europe founding Churches in Christ.

1. The phrase is more fully explained in other parts of the Apostle's writings to be such union with Christ as to involve our being crucified with Him, dead, buried, risen, ascended with Him. But what does all this mean? To understand these mystical terms fully, one would need to pass through the experience of which they are the expression. But something may be said by way of indicating the direction in which to look for the explanation.

It is necessary, in order to the new life of heavenly devotion, that the affections be shifted from earth to heaven, from self to God. How is it to be done? It is easy to say, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind"; but how can I do it? I cannot force myself to love anybody. I cannot even force myself to love a good man. How then can I get to love God, who seems so far away, so impalpable that I cannot grasp Him, so much offended that I dare not approach Him, and so completely out of the sphere of my ordinary life that all human ways of winning my love are impossible on account of the infinite distance between Him and me?

Now, it is perfectly true that under these conditions it is impossible that there should be awakened in any human heart love enough to God to counterbalance the earthly affection. But see how it is all met in Christ. Christ is "God manifest in the flesh," so that He can and does come close enough to make it possible for Him to win our affection. And this He does by the beauty of His character, by the tenderness of His heart, by the constancy of His love, by His giving up everything for us, and, above all, by His agony and death for us, to take away our sin, to

rescue us from death, to redeem our lives from destruction and to crown us with loving-kindness and tender mercies—thus it is that He draws His people to Him with the bonds of an affection which easily becomes paramount and supreme. Those who yield themselves to it are drawn to Him so closely that, spiritually, they are one with Him, just as the true wife is one with the husband whom she loves with all her heart, so thoroughly one with him that what the husband suffers she suffers—she is sick with him, she is pained with him, she is in agony with him, and if he die she dies with him—not literally, of course, but spiritually and really, how really let her altered life after the great crisis only too truthfully tell; and oh, how much of her heart goes after him to the heaven where he is gone!

¶ If a man is in Christ, he must have regeneration; for how can the Head be alive, and the members dead? If a man is in Christ, he must be justified; for how can God approve the Head, and condemn the members? If a man is in Christ, he must have sanctification; for how can the spotlessly Holy remain in vital connexion with one that is unholy? If a man is in Christ, he must have redemption; for how can the Son of God be in glory, while that which He has made a part of His body lies abandoned in the grave of eternal death?[1]

2. Thus we get a profound insight into the Divine method of salvation. God does not work upon the soul by itself; bringing to bear upon it, while yet in its alienation and isolation from Him, such discipline as shall gradually render it fit to be reunited to Him. He begins rather by reuniting it to Himself, that through this union He may communicate to it that Divine life and energy without which all discipline were utterly futile. The method of grace is precisely the reverse of the method of legalism. The latter is holiness in order to union with God; the former, union with God in order to holiness. Hence, the Incarnation, as the starting-point and prime condition of reconciliation to God; since there can be, to use Hooker's admirable statement, "no union of God with man, without that mean between both which is both." And hence the necessity of incorporation with Christ, that what became possible through the Incarnation may become actual and experimental in the individual soul through faith

[1] A. J. Gordon, *In Christ*, 10.

I wish a greater Knowledge than to attain
The knowledge of my self; a greater Gain
Than to augment my self; a greater Treasure
Than to enjoy my self; a greater Pleasure
Than to content my self; how slight and vain
Is all Self-knowledge, Pleasure, Treasure, Gain;
Unless my better Knowledge could retrieve
My Christ; unless my better Gain to thrive
In Christ; unless my better wealth grow rich
In Christ; unless my better Pleasure pitch
On Christ; or else my Knowledge will proclaim
To my own heart, how ignorant I am:
Or else my Gain, so ill improved, will shame
My trade, and shew how much declined I am:
Or else my Treasure will but blot my name
With Bankrupt, and divulge how poor I am:
Or else my Pleasures that so much inflame
My thoughts, will blab how full of sores I am:
Lord, keep me from my self, 'tis best for me,
Never to own my self, if not in Thee.[1]

3. If, then, we are Christ's, we enter spiritually into "the fellowship of his sufferings," so that we are crucified with Him, dead with Him, buried with Him, and rise with Him, finding it a second nature thereafter to set our affections on things above. That is what the Apostle means when, after speaking of the Risen Christ, he says: "If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature." His agnosticism is gone; his guilt and condemnation are gone; his bondage to lust and passion is gone; his heart is set on higher things; God is now the centre of his life, and not only is he himself a new creature, but there is around him a new creation. Earth is much smaller than it used to be, and the infinities of the great universe of God begin to open out to his spirit, even as they began to open out to the intellect of the astronomers after they followed Copernicus to the new centre he had found in the sun.

Nothing is more striking than the breadth of application which this principle of union with Christ has in the gospel. Christianity obliterates no natural relationships, destroys no human obligations, makes void no moral or spiritual laws. But

[1] Francis Quarles.

it lifts all these up into a new sphere, and puts upon them this seal and signature of the gospel—"in Christ." So that while all things continue as they were from the beginning, all, by their readjustment to this Divine character and Person, become virtually new. Life is still of God, but it has this new dependency "in Christ." "Of him are ye in Christ Jesus." The obligation to labour remains unchanged, but a new motive and a new sanctity are given to it by its relation to Christ: "Forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord." The marriage relation is stamped with this new signet, "Only in the Lord." Filial obedience is exalted into direct connexion with the Son of God: "Children obey your parents in the Lord." Daily life becomes "a good conversation in Christ." Joy and sorrow, triumph and suffering, are all in Christ. Even truth, as though needing a fresh baptism, is viewed henceforth "as it is in Jesus." Death remains, but it is robbed of its sting and crowned with a beatitude, because in Christ, "Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord."

¶ "In Christ!" How mighty the expression! How singular, yet how exact the description! "In Christ," then out of the world. "In Christ," then out of self! "In Christ," then no more in the flesh, no more in sin, no more in vanity, no more in darkness, no more in the crooked paths of the god of this world.[1]

4. But if we are to see how much St. Paul meant by being "in Christ," we must get at his meaning by an induction rather than a description.

(1) "The law of the spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death" (Rom. viii. 2). Here "in Christ Jesus" is a sphere of freedom; and it is freedom of a well-known and recognizable type. It is the freedom by which a higher law and a more developed life-system superseded a lower and less developed one.

¶ It used to be the proud boast of our countrymen that no slave could breathe under the British flag. By setting foot on British soil he ceased to be a slave. The law of freedom superseded the laws of slavery as by a higher right. What our fathers claimed for British rule in the sphere of personal freedom St. Paul claimed for the person of Christ in the sphere of spiritual

[1] Horatius Bonar.

freedom. No man, however bound in bondage of sin by lusts, passions, habits, superstitions, worldliness, or selfishness could come into Christ without finding his bonds fall from him. The law of the spirit of life in Christ Jesus would set him free from the law of sin and death. When Eliza, the slave-mother in *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, finds that she is sold to a new owner who is going to separate her from her child, she makes a desperate effort to escape. She has been sold in Kentucky: if she can get into Ohio she will be under other laws, and her child will be her own. She slips away from the inn where the sale has been transacted down to the river bank. But there is no boat to take her across! She hides in terror till she hears the hounds baying on her track. Then, with the courage of despair, she leaps out on the floating ice floes in the river; she passes from one to another, her child in her arms, her feet cut and bleeding, till she is almost across the river; then as she nears the other shore a stranger who has watched her flight reaches out a hand and she lands in safety—a free woman. The laws that bound her do not run here. They have ceased to have any authority over her.[1]

(2) "Salute Prisca and Aquila my fellow-workers in Christ Jesus. . . . Salute Urbanus our fellow-worker in Christ" (Rom. xvi. 3, 9). "In Christ" is a sphere of work as well as a sphere of freedom. The nature of the work is tolerably clear from the connexion in which the words occur. Aquila and Priscilla had a "church in their house," where they and others constantly endeavoured to justify the ways of God to men; and brought men to the knowledge of God through Christ. To be "in Christ" was to be a fellow-worker with St. Paul in this great endeavour. "In Christ" they found a solution of the problem of man's relation to the unseen world. They found the "good news of God" which lifted away the uncertainties that hung like a mist over man's destiny; and they felt the news so great that they must make it known. They became fellow-workers in the endeavour to bring men into a life which was to be a conscious fellowship with God.

¶ Love is more often the child of service than its parent. Out of the experience of difficulties overcome, of the hearts of men answering to the word of Christ, and the minds of men responding to His Spirit, comes the confidence which is the renewal of faith. It is an old recipe for dealing with scepticism to send it to teach in a slum or a ragged-school. The worth of the spiritual element

[1] D. Macfadyen, *Truth in Religion*, 246.

in life is never so manifest as when we come to know the meaning of life stripped bare of that element. It is then we know what it is to be "fellow-workers in Christ."[1]

(3) Sometimes one gets a flash of insight into St. Paul's mind through a single casual phrase, as when he says, "I speak the truth in Christ, I lie not"; or, "minds corrupted from simplicity toward Christ." The life of humanity as St. Paul sees it in Christ is a clean, sweet, ordered, simple life. Of late much has been said and written of the simple life. But the simple life is not life in a cottage or life in a flat, but life "in Christ." And it is that wherever it is lived.

¶ The talk about the simple life is a natural revolt against the complications of a cumbrous civilization which is at some points becoming too heavy for the shoulders that have to carry it. Our churches are like the Italian condottieri in the days when defensive armour had reached its highest point of development, and before guns had been introduced to make armour useless. They were so smothered in armour that when a man fell from his horse he could not rise. He might expire on the ground unless some friend came to release him. With us it is the elaborate organization of life, and the increasing demands of ecclesiastical dominion that are destroying the spontaneity of nature in the soul's life.[2]

(4) But the climax of St. Paul's way of interpreting the Christian life is reached in the phrase in this text—"a new creation" in Christ. Men who live in this sphere of spiritual freedom, work in this atmosphere, and admit the force of this dynamic, undergo a new spiritual creation. The fact has its physical analogy with which every one is familiar. We may have known someone condemned to exile by the doctors. He was told that he could not live in this climate, but if he would go to South Africa or New Zealand or Australia, breathe a drier atmosphere, live in the open air, he might indefinitely prolong his life. He went, and we lost sight of him for a time, but in ten or fifteen years he came back, broad-shouldered, sun-browned, vigorous, hearty, strong. When we saw him we said instinctively, "My friend, you are a new man, one would hardly have known you." And the phrase is true enough. The body has been rebuilt, new elements built into it, new energies stored in it,

[1] D. Macfadyen. [2] D. Macfadyen.

years of hope and service have now become possible for it which were once impossible.

¶ On an early morning of February, his wife awoke, to hear that the light they had waited for more than they that watch for the morning, had risen indeed. She asked, "What have you seen?" He replied, "The Gospel." It came to him at last, after all his thought and study, not as something reasoned out, but as an inspiration—a revelation from the mind of God Himself. The full meaning of his answer he embodied at once in a sermon on "Christ the Form of the Soul," from the text, "Until Christ be formed in you." The very title of this sermon expresses his spiritually illuminated conception of Christ as the indwelling, formative life of the soul, the new creating power of righteousness for humanity. And this conception was soon after more adequately set forth in his book, "God in Christ." That he regarded this as a crisis in his spiritual life is evident from his not infrequent reference to it among his Christian friends. He regarded this experience as a "personal discovery of Christ, and of God as represented in Him." To those about him he seemed "a new man," or rather, the same man with a heavenly investiture. Or, as he himself explained it: "I seemed to pass a boundary. I had never been very legal in my Christian life, but now I passed from those partial seeings, glimpses, and doubts, into a clearer knowledge of God and into His inspirations, which I have never wholly lost. The change was into faith—a sense of the freeness of God, and the ease of approach to Him."[1]

## II.

### A New Creation Within.

1. It is the great characteristic of the New Testament that it demands a new creation. This is its specific message. Other systems that seek to change character and society insist on education, amelioration, reformation or revolution. The New Testament has little to say about any of these, but demands the new creature—a new creation. Nothing is sufficient except a definite change in the spirit of the man—a change that is so complete and radical that it must be spoken of as a creation, an act of supernatural Divine grace, which makes the creature new, and all life new with it.

[1] T. T. Munger, *Horace Bushnell*, 114.

"A new creation!" Then, from the very root of being, upward throughout all its branches, a marvellous change has taken place a change which nothing can fitly describe, save the creating of all things out of nothing at the beginning, or the new-creating of this corrupted world into a glorious earth and heaven, when the Lord returns to take possession of it as His Kingdom for ever. "A new creation!"—then old feelings, old habits, old tastes, old hopes, old joys, old sorrows, old haunts, old companionships, all are gone! Old things have passed away, all things have become new. Christ in us, and we in Christ,—how thorough and profound the change must have been! "Christ formed in us," nay, "in us the hope of glory"; and we created in Christ unto good works after the very likeness of incarnate Godhead—how inconceivably glorious the renewal, the transfiguration wrought in us; for nothing short of transfiguration is it, considered even in its general and most common aspect.

¶ When Jenny Lind, the famous vocalist, suddenly discovered her powers as a singer, it perfectly transformed her whole outlook upon life. She has described the day of the discovery thus: "I got up that morning one creature, I went to bed another creature. I had found my power." "On that day," remarks her biographer, "she woke to herself, she became artistically alive: she felt the inspiration and won the sway which she now felt it was hers to have and to hold. It was a step out into a new world of dominion."

¶ Patrick Daley was one of the first to profess conversion in connexion with Mr. Moody's recent evangelistic services in Boston. He had been a staunch Roman Catholic by persuasion, but a desperate drunkard by practice. With an overpowering desire to be saved from his evil habit, he so far broke through the prejudices of his religion as to go and listen to the great evangelist. There he heard with astonishment and delight that the chief of sinners and the most hopeless of drunkards might find immediate forgiveness and deliverance through surrender to Jesus Christ. He went into the inquiry-room, and trustingly accepted the Saviour, and entered into great peace and joy in believing. Several weeks after his conversion, he approached me at the close of a meeting with his story and his question.

"You see, your reverence, I know a good thing when I get it; and when I found salvation, I could not keep it to myself. Peter Murphy lived in the upper story of the same tenement with me. Murphy was a worse drunkard than me, if such a thing could be;

and we had gone on many a spree together. Well, when I got saved and washed clean in the blood of Christ, I was so happy I did not know what to do with myself. So I went up to Murphy, and told him what I had got. Poor Peter! he was just getting over a spree, and was pretty sick and sore, and just ready to do anything I told him. So I got him to sign the pledge, and then told him that Jesus alone could help him keep it. Then I got him on his knees, and made him pray and surrender to the Lord, as I had done. You never see such a change in a man as there was in him for the next week. I kept watch of him, and prayed for him, and helped him on the best I could, and, sure, he was a different man. Well, come Sunday morning, Joe Healey called round to pay his usual visit. This was the worst yet; for Healey used to come to see Murphy as regular as Sunday, always bringing a bottle of whisky with him, and these two would spree it all day, till they turned the whole house into a bedlam. Well, I saw Healey coming last Sunday morning, and I was afraid it would be all up with poor Murphy if he got with him. So when I went to the door to let him in, and he said, 'Good morning, Pat; is Murphy in?' I said, 'No; Murphy is out. He does not live here any longer'; and in this way I sent Healey off, and saved Murphy from temptation."

Here was the burden of Patrick Daley's question; for he continued: "Did I tell a lie? What I meant was that the *old Murphy* did not live there any more. For you know Mr. Moody told us that when a man is converted he is a new creature; old things have passed away. And I believe that Murphy is a new creature, and that the old Murphy does not live any more in that attic. That is what I meant. Did I tell a lie?"

Candid reader, what should I say? In the light of Paul's great saying, "Nevertheless I live; *yet not I*, but Christ liveth in me," can it be denied that Patrick Daley was right?[1]

2. "No such change is possible," men say. "Character is not made in a day. All this talk about being born again—about becoming a new man—is misleading and mischievous." Yes, it may be, if you do not understand it. Perfection of Christian character is not reached in a day. The telephone was not perfected in a day; but the idea, the essential telephone, was born in a minute. So with the Christian character. "Complete realization," says President Harris, "lies in the future, but the type itself, in the principle and power of it, is already actual.

[1] *A. J. Gordon: A Biography*, 97.

Because the type now exists, its complete attainment is to be expected. I regard this as one of the most important considerations for Christian ethics as well as one of the most unique features of the Christian religion. It explains and combines the statements of Scripture that man is to be saved in the future and yet is saved in the present; that he will have and that he now has eternal life."

¶ In the life of every man has there been a day when the heavens opened of their own accord, and it is almost always from that very instant that dates his true spiritual personality. It is doubtless at that instant that are formed the invisible, eternal features that we reveal, though we know it not, to angels and to souls. But with most men it is chance alone that has caused the heavens to open; and they have not chosen the face whereby the angels know them in the infinite, nor have they understood how to ennoble and purify its features—which do indeed but owe their being to an accidental joy or sadness, an accidental thought or fear. Our veritable birth dates from the day when, for the first time, we feel at the deepest of us that there is something grave and unexpected in life. Some there are who realize suddenly that they are not alone under the sky. To others it will be brusquely revealed, while shedding a tear or giving a kiss, that "the source of all that is good and holy from the universe up to God is hidden behind a night, full of too distant stars"; a third will see a Divine hand stretched forth between his joy and his misfortune; and yet another will have understood that it is the dead who are in the right. One will have had pity, another will have admired or been afraid. Often does it need almost nothing, a word, a gesture, a little thing that is not even a thought. "Before, I loved thee as a brother, John," says one of Shakespeare's heroes, admiring the other's action, "but now, I do respect thee as my soul." On that day it is probable that a being will have come into the world. We can be born thus more than once; and each birth brings us a little nearer to our God. But most of us are content to wait till an event charged with almost irresistible radiance intrudes itself violently upon our darkness, and enlightens us, in our despite. We await I know not what happy coincidence, when it may so come about that the eyes of our soul shall be open at the very moment that something extraordinary takes place. But in everything that happens is there light; and the greatness of the greatest of men has but consisted in that they had trained their eyes to be open to every ray of this light.[1]

[1] M. Maeterlinck, *The Treasure of the Humble*, 172.

3. Is not a great deal of moral effort to-day spasmodic and almost fruitless because men do not take themselves in hand with thoroughness? To try to do something right here and there, while the bias of life is left in the wrong direction is a miserable piece of work; patching a rotten garment with bits of virtue; washing a hand when the whole body needs to be plunged in the cleansing fountain. We have known persons who found that their course of conduct was disastrous to them, and under compulsion they have changed it, but they are what they were though their habits have changed; the old spirit still remains, the spirit that seeks its own advantage always. That was the motive in the old habits; they have simply seen that other habits are necessary to serve their purpose. So they are not new creatures though they have new clothes. If a time came when the old habits would serve them again, they would take them on. They remind one of a fable in which the cat is transformed into a princess, but a mouse crosses her path, and in an instant the princess is a cat once more.

¶ Christ did not come into this world to patch up an old religion, merely to mend a hole here, and beautify a spot there, and add a touch to this part or that; He came to make all things new. And when He saves a sinner, He does not propose merely to mend him up a little here and there, to cover over some bad spots in him, and to close up rents in his character by strong patches of the new cloth of grace. Gospel work is not patchwork. Christ does not sew on pieces; He weaves a new garment without seam throughout.[1]

4. This new creation involves certain facts which are worth considering.

(1) It means that we have *a new standing before God.*—If I am a new creation in Christ, then I stand before God, not in myself but in Christ. God sees no longer me, but only Him in whom I am—Him who represents me, Christ Jesus, my substitute and surety. In believing, I have become so identified with the Son of His love that the favour with which He regards Him passes over to me, and rests, like the sunshine of the new heavens, upon me. In Christ, and through Christ, I have acquired a new standing before the Father. I am "accepted in the beloved."

[1] J. R. Miller.

My old standing, namely that of distance, and disfavour, and condemnation, is wholly removed, and I am brought into one of nearness and acceptance and pardon; I am made to occupy a new footing, just as if my old one had never been. Old guilt, heavy as the mountain, vanishes; old dread, gloomy as midnight, passes off; old suspicion, dark as hell, gives place to the joyful confidence arising from forgiveness and reconciliation, and the complete blotting out of sin. All things are made new. I have changed my standing before God; and that simply in consequence of that oneness between me and Christ which has been established through my believing the record given concerning Him. I come to Him on a new footing, for I am "in Christ," and in me there has been a new creation.

(2) It points to *a new relationship to God*.—If we are new creatures, then we no longer bear the same relationship to God. Our old connexion has been dissolved, and a new one established. We were aliens once, we are now sons; and as sons we have the privilege of closest fellowship. Every vestige of estrangement between us is gone. At every point, instead of barriers rising up to separate and repel, there are links, knitting us together in happiest, closest union. Enmity is gone on our part, displeasure on His. He calls us sons; we call Him Father. Paternal love comes down on His part, filial love goes up on ours. The most entire mutual confidence has been established between us. No more strangers and foreigners, we are become fellow-citizens with the saints, and of the household of God, every cloud being withdrawn that could cast a single shadow upon the simple gladness of our happy intercourse. There has been truly a new creation; "old things have passed away, all things have become new." Our new relationship is for eternity. He is eternally our Father; and we are eternally His sons.

(3) It means that we have entered upon *a new way of life*.—For when men's hearts are stirred by the higher love, when the spirit is possessed by the Divine impulse, when Christ has come in, man feels that the saving power has gripped him; and though a long battle may still have to be fought to subdue the whole life to the central spirit, yet that spirit having possessed the centre, there is promise of final triumph. Now this is just the difference between morality and religion, between what that man meant by character

and what he meant by Christ; the one is the feeling that we are trying to win goodness, the other is the feeling that the good God has laid hold on us; in the one we have a sense of struggling to hold on to virtue, in the other we have the consciousness of being sustained in the struggle by One that is mighty. This is the need of the individual, and this is certainly the need of the Church.

5. To put it the other way, this new creation is necessary—

(1) *In order to get rid of sin.*—Many people talk as if it were an easy thing to get rid of that mysterious quality in our being which we distinguish as sin. They talk of turning over a new leaf. It is an easy thing to turn over a new leaf, but it is far more difficult to get free from sin.

¶ I was reading a medical book the other day—which books, I find, open a very suggestive field to the theologian; for there is a wonderful analogy between physical and moral maladies. The subject was the sterilizing of the hands. The writer showed how impossible it was to cleanse the hands from bacteria. You wash your hands and they are worse when you have finished than before you commenced. The water has liberated the bacteria until now your hands literally swarm with these forms of life. Then the writer goes on to show that you may attempt to cleanse them with benzine or with alcohol, but when you have done your utmost the hands are still surgically infected. Before I read that book, it seemed one of the easiest things in the world to wash my hands, but now I know that it is physically impossible by any process so to cleanse the hands as to be free from the contamination of vermin and death. "Cleanse your hands, ye sinners," says the sacred writer, "and purify your hearts ye doubleminded." Is that an easy task?[1]

(2) *In order to have peace of conscience.*—Many of our great philosophers tell us that human nature can never attain content with itself. They tell us that our activity contradicts our ideal, that our carnal self is opposed to our rational self, and that our impulse dominates duty. So in the very nature of things a man cannot be at peace in himself. Thus one of the philosophers—Schopenhauer—asks this question, "Was there ever a man who was at peace with himself?"

(3) *In order to obtain spiritual knowledge.*—We have not brought into our life the knowledge of God; that is the secret of our dis-

[1] W. L. Watkinson.

content. We want the miracle of creation working in nature. There was a time when nature stood great and material, but there came a day (if you like to express it so) when the Spirit breathed upon its rugged greatness, and all was changed.

¶ Botanists tell us that there was a time when all the flowers were green and rough; but there came a day when they received a spiritual touch, and in place of the full monotony of green they blossomed pink and blue, crimson and gold. That is the touch we want. Scientists tell us that there was a time when the birds did not sing (for these gentlemen inform us that music is very recent). All the birds were there, yet they had no melody nor song; but there came a strange moment for the world of birds, and they responded to the touch of the Spirit and became the songsters of morning entering the realm of music. It is a touch like that we want! There was a time, so thinkers say, when man existed in a certain shape they call the almost-man. One day the Spirit breathed upon the almost-man and he stood up as the man we know in Milton and Shakespeare, St. Paul and St. John. That is the touch we want. As these great scientists tell us, there was special breath which caused the green flowers to be decked with radiant glory, the silent birds to break out in the sweet minstrelsy of song, and the almost-man to arise to dignity, intelligence and spirituality; that is the great change which many people need. They have the material form, but they want the touch of the Spirit, which makes life higher, grander and nobler.[1]

## III.

### The New Creation Without.

Change the man and you change his world. The new self will make all around it as good as new, though no actual change should pass on it; for, to a very wonderful extent, a man creates his own world. We project the hue of our own spirits on things outside. A bright and cheerful temper sees all things on their sunny side. A weary, uneasy mind drapes the very earth in gloom. Lift from a man his load of inward anxiety and you change the aspect of the universe to that man; for, if "to the pure all things are pure," it is no less true that to the happy all things are happy. Especially is the world revolutionized and

[1] W. L. Watkinson.

made new to a man by a noble and joyous passion. Any great enthusiasm which lifts a man above his average self for the time makes him like a new man, and transfigures the universe in his eyes. Even common natures know how the one pure, imaginative passion of youthful love, which to most people is the solitary enthusiasm of their life, works a temporary enchantment. All poetry and art, fastening on this as the commonest form of noble passion, have worked this vein and made us familiar with the transforming virtue of young love betwixt youth and maiden to turn the prose of life to poetry, to make the vulgar heroic, and the common-place romantic. The ideal lover moves in a world of his own. To him "old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new." Now, this power of human nature, when exalted through high and noble emotion, to make its own world, will be realized in its profoundest form when the soul is re-created by the free Spirit of God. Let God lift us above our old selves, and inspire us with no earthly, but with the pure flame of a celestial, devotion; let Him breathe into our hearts the noblest, freest of all enthusiasms, the enthusiasm for Himself; and to us all things will become new. We shall seem to ourselves to have entered another world, where we breathe lighter air, see an intenser sunlight, and move to the impulses of a more generous spirit.

¶ Science entirely fascinated him; his first plunge into real scientific work opened to him a new life, gave him the first sense of power and of capacity. Now he read Mr. Darwin's books, and it is impossible to overrate the extraordinary effect they had on the young man's mind. Something of the feeling which Keats describes in the sonnet "On looking into Chapman's Homer" seems to have been his:

> Then felt I like some watcher of the skies
> When a new planet swims into his ken;
> Or like stout Cortez when with eagle eyes
> He stared at the Pacific—and all his men
> Look'd at each other with a wild surmise—
> Silent, upon a peak in Darien.[1]

¶ It is a new world into which a man is led forth when Christ is formed in him; when his life is joined, by the bonds of

[1] *The Life and Letters of George John Romanes*, 8.

a living fellowship, with the life of the Son of Man. There is a new creation; the morning stars are singing together and the sons of God are shouting for joy. No one ever knows how beautiful this world is, how fair its fields, how glorious its skies, till he has looked upon it with eyes anointed by a great affection. Under the spell of such a revelation all tasks are sweet, all burdens light. Into this liberty of the glory of the sons of God may some of you who labour and are heavy-laden be led by Him who is the Way and the Truth and the Life![1]

1. *Christ is new.* — Consider the difference between what Christ is to St. Paul now and what He was to him in the old persecuting days. In those old days Jesus of Nazareth was to him a mere atom of humanity, a single individual out of countless multitudes who had lived and suffered and died upon the earth; and not even that any longer, for He was blotted out by death, nothing remaining of Him but the mere empty name of a dead impostor, made use of by some superstitious people to attempt to overturn the time-honoured fabric of the Hebrew faith. What is He now? Atom of humanity? No: the very God. He is the sun in the heavens, the centre of all light, and life, and love, and power.

From the moment that the light above the brightness of the sun shone upon the spirit of St. Paul, he ceased to identify Christ with the flesh He had worn on earth, and now identified Him with the God over all whom in that flesh He had revealed. And in making the Christ whom he had despised the centre of his life, round which it all revolved, His will its law, His glory its aim, His smile its light, His love its motive power—if he was reproached by others with being eccentric, he was content to be able to say: "Whether we be beside ourselves, it is to God."

New creatures; the Creator still the Same
  For ever and for ever: therefore we
  Win hope from God's unsearchable decree
And glorify His still unchanging Name.
We too are still the same: and still our claim,
  Our trust, our stay, is Jesus, none but He:
  He still the Same regards us, and still we
Mount toward Him in old love's accustomed flame.

[1] W. Gladden, *Where does the Sky Begin*, 201.

We know Thy wounded Hands: and Thou dost know
Our praying hands, our hands that clasp and cling
To hold Thee fast and not to let Thee go.
All else be new then, Lord, as Thou hast said:
Since it is Thou, we dare not be afraid,
Our King of old and still our Self-same King.[1]

2. *God is new.*—Man has seen God in Christ as man never saw God before. It is fashionable for intellectual men, or rather —for the fashion of this world's thought changes—a few years ago it used to be in good intellectual form for men to say, "We may believe that God exists, but we cannot know anything of God." That passing fashion of thought, however, was fatally illogical, because the very words which were in vogue in some quarters about God, such as, "He is the unknown and unknowable Power," really affirmed something, of which we have some latent idea, about the unknown God. And we may have real though finite knowledge of infinite things. I can know what light is by a single ray in my eye, although I cannot contain in my eye the infinite flood of light which fills all space. And I may know God by a single beam of truth in my soul, although I cannot know God in His infinitude of being. To us who are capable, then. of receiving truth from God because we are made in the image of God, Jesus Christ brought a new revelation of the essential and eternal character of God. And what was that revelation? Not an image of Deity for the Holy Place of the Temple, in which was no likeness of God. Not a map of the Divine attributes, as they are found in the books of the Schoolmen. Not a form of God which we may look upon and worship as a picture of Divinity in our imaginations. Jesus is never depicted pointing His disciples to the sky, as we do, when we say to our children, "God is there, Heaven is up above." You cannot find in the teaching of Jesus one word about God's nature which is addressed to these bodily senses. But when Philip said, "Shew us the Father,"—poor bewildered disciple, finding the truth he had been learning too great for him, and thinking, If I could only know the Father, if I could only see God as I see man,—then Jesus said, "Have I been so long time with you, and dost thou not know me, Philip? he that hath seen me hath seen the Father."

[1] Christina G. Rossetti, *Verses*, 27.

That was His revelation, His new, world-changing revelation of God. Himself, His Person, His character, His conduct—you know that; such is God. The one word which declares God is Christ. Christlikeness is what God is.

5. *Man is new.*—As man is discovered to us in Christ, he is found to be a new creature. Man is in Christ another man. It will make a vast difference with us whether we habitually look upon man as created in Christ, or without Christ. You go down the street, and pass some one who is to you only another of the multitude of human beings of whom there seem sometimes to be already many more than there is any use for on this earth. You do not know that man, and do not want to know him. He may be only some worthless creature who hives, with other miserables, in some tenement house which was built by the devil of greed, and has been rented to demons of vice and squalor. Only some Board of Health, or the police, have occasion to know the habitats of so much swarming and festering humanity! Or the man you meet may be respectable and honest enough, for all you know, only he exists, and must live his life, whatever it may be, in some one of those worlds which lie below the one into which you were born, and, probably enough, his name is not to be found written in your book of life. You owe him, you will admit, "equal rights," "liberty to make contracts," a certain humanity, and, if he should ever happen to come to your church, a seat in somebody else's pew. Something like that, in spirit, was the old-world view of man before the birth of Christ. That is the view of him which you might take, had you not been baptized into the name of Christ, in whom our whole common humanity exists, redeemed and capable of a great salvation. But what thought Jesus Christ of humanity as He came from the Father, and met that publican in Jericho? As He went to God what said the Lord Jesus to that thief upon a cross? As Jesus' revelation of God was vivifying, and is potential with blessing for the whole world, so also His revelation of man is wonderfully ennobling and transfiguring. Jesus brought out, perfected, and showed in His own Divine Person, the true image of humanity. Man is made to become Christlike. Man may be saved to Christlikeness.[1]

[1] Newman Smyth.

4. *Life is new.*—Examine the average life which is being led in a society (we will say) like our own; what is there about it that is noble or exalted? To get along comfortably; to make money; perhaps, in some cases, to make a great deal of money; to keep trouble at a distance, if possible; and to surround oneself with everything that is pleasant and agreeable; does not this—or something like this—seem to be the condition of hundreds and hundreds of the ordinary men and women with whom we are acquainted? They are respectable! They are blameless! They are kind! No one can lay any grave fault to their charge. But to say that there is anything lofty or noble or aspiring about them would be a simple misuse of language. But let Christ enter the life, and all this is changed. The commonest act is ennobled by being done for Him. Let Christ into all life; and the present—no matter what it is—reaches out and fastens itself on to the distant eternity, and becomes the germ of a never-ending existence.

Old sorrows that sat at the heart's sealed gate
Like sentinels grim and sad,
While out in the night damp, weary and late,
The King, with a gift divinely great,
Waited to make me glad:

Old fears that hung like a changing cloud
Over a sunless day,
Old burdens that kept the spirit bowed,
Old wrongs that rankled and clamoured loud—
They have passed like a dream away.

In the world without and the world within
He maketh the old things new;
The touch of sorrow, the stain of sin,
Have fled from the gate where the King came in,
From the chill night's damp and dew.

Anew in the heavens the sweet stars shine,
On earth new blossoms spring;
The old life lost in the Life Divine,
"Thy will be mine, my will is Thine,"
Is the new song the hearts sing.

5. *And the whole universe is new.*—For when the great change takes place, even the face of nature has a different look: there is a new glory in the heavens and a new beauty on the earth; the light that never was on sea or land begins to dawn.

The revolution in science which is associated with the name of Copernicus, was a similar shifting of the centre from earth to heaven; and the result of it was a new creation, a universe totally different from what had been known, or even imagined, before. Up to this time, it had been taken for granted that the earth was the centre of the universe, and on that false assumption there had been built up a vast science of astronomy (which, be it remembered, the scientific men of the time accepted as correct), a science which was no mere guess-work, for it was based on observations which had been most carefully made and diligently recorded for centuries. The intricacies of that old Ptolemaic system of the universe seem absurd enough to us now; but all its spheres, and cycles, and epicycles, and deferents had a strong foundation on exceedingly patient and careful observations of the motions of the heavenly bodies as taken from the earth. As taken from the earth—there lay the whole fallacy. But one might ask, Where else can you take them from? Erect the highest Eiffel Tower on the top of the loftiest mountain, and still you take your observations from the earth. To which Copernicus replied: Nevertheless, so long as you take your observations from the earth, you are all wrong; for it is not the centre. The true centre is the sun, and though you cannot put your observatory in the sun, you can go there by faith; you can take your station there mentally even if you cannot bodily, and then out of old chaos will at once come new order.

¶ At the great spring Drômenon the tribe and the growing earth were renovated together: the earth arises fresh from her dead seeds, the tribe from its dead ancestors; and the whole process, charged as it is with the emotion of pressing human desire, projects its anthropomorphic god or daemon. A vegetation-spirit we call him, very inadequately; he is a divine Kouros, a Year-Daemon, a spirit that in the first stage is living, then dies with each year, then thirdly rises again from the dead, raising the whole dead world with him—the Greeks called him in this phase "the Third One," or the "Saviour." The renovation ceremonies were accompanied by a casting off of the old year, the old gar-

ments, and everything that is polluted by the infection of death. And not only of death; but clearly, I think, in spite of the protests of some Hellenists, of guilt or sin also. For the life of the Year-Daemon, as it seems to be reflected in Tragedy, is generally a story of Pride and Punishment. Each Year arrives, waxes great, commits the sin of Hubris, and then is slain. The death is deserved; but the slaying is a sin: hence comes the next Year as Avenger, or as the Wronged One re-risen: "they all pay retribution for their injustice one to another according to the ordinance of time." It is this range of ideas, half suppressed during the classical period, but evidently still current among the ruder and less Hellenized peoples, which supplied St. Paul with some of his most famous and deep-reaching metaphors. "Thou fool, that which thou sowest is not quickened except it die." "As he was raised from the dead we may walk with him in newness of life." And this renovation must be preceded by a casting out and killing of the old polluted life—"the old man in us must first be crucified."[1]

¶ Midway down the Simplon pass the traveller pauses to read upon a stone by the wayside the single word, "Italia." The Alpine pines cling to the mountain-sides between whose steeps the rough way winds. The snows cover the peaks, and the brooks are frozen to the precipices. The traveller wraps his cloak about him against the frost that reigns undisputed upon those ancient thrones of ice-bound rock. But at the point where that stone with the word "Italia" stands, he passes a boundary-line. From there the way begins into another world. Soon every step makes plainer how great has been the change from Switzerland to Italy. The brooks, unbound, leap laughing over the cliffs. The snows have melted from the path. The air grows warm and fragrant. The regiments of hardy pine no longer struggle in broken lines up the mountain-side. The leaves of the olive trees glisten in the sunshine. The vines follow the wayside. The sky seems near and kind. And below, embosomed in verdure, Lake Maggiore expands before him. As he rests at evening time he knows that the entrance into a new world was marked by the word "Italia" upon that stone at the summit of the pass. Humanity has crossed a boundary-line between two eras. Up to Bethlehem was one way, growing bleaker, and more barren, and colder, as man hastened on. Down from Bethlehem has been another and a happier time. The one civilization was as Switzerland shut in among its icy Alps; the other is as Lombardy's fruitful plain.[2]

[1] Gilbert Murray, *Four Stages of Greek Religion*, 46.

[2] N. Smyth, *Christian Facts and Forces*, 4.

O all-surpassing Splendour!—one alone
Of earthly race hath seen that vision fair;
The present God, the rainbow round the throne,
And the elect, descending through the air,
His Tabernacle,—He their glorious light;
For in His presence there can be no night.

"All New,"—a higher world then had been made
In the past-workings of omnipotence,
Wills without sin,—Earth's precious stones displayed
Tell faintly some Divine magnificence.
Of that regenerate sphere, the pure abode
For sons and daughters of the Immortal God.[1]

[1] W. J. Irons.

# The New and the Old.

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## The New and the Old.

The old things are passed away; behold, they are become new.—2 Cor v. 17.

1. This is a very bold and sweeping statement. We seem almost to be listening to a prophet of revolution. St. Paul, addressing the democratic Corinthians, might be regarded himself as speaking the language of democracy. His view of Christianity, it might be said, was that it was an absolute emancipation from the fetters and traditions of the past. He was an over-zealous and ardent reformer; he had no reverence for antiquity; he was full only of a new order of things which was to supersede all that had gone before. Old thoughts, old systems, old beliefs—of all these a clean sweep was to be made, and man was to start afresh on a new path of progress, of which none could see the end. And something like this is the view, no doubt, which many persons have taken of Christianity. They do regard it essentially as a democratic movement, as a class religion. They identify it with the interests of a class. To them its chief charm consists in its assertion of the freedom and the equality of all men. They see that it has emancipated the slave and defended the right of the poor, and they value it most exclusively as the prime agent in a great social revolution. It was this communistic tendency that caused it to be welcomed at first by one class and suspected by another. Hence it was that the poor and the oppressed embraced it so eagerly. Hence it was that rulers, holding it to be subversive of governments, dreaded and sought to crush it in its cradle. It is the same tendency that in later times made many hail its influence, who had no sympathy with its creed.

Yet it cannot seriously be maintained that this is the view which St. Paul took of Christianity. Much less can it be pretended that such an opinion finds any kind of countenance or support in this passage. The revolution of which St. Paul is

speaking here is entirely a spiritual revolution. He has learnt, he tells us, a new estimate of things, he has learnt to give them their proper value. He no longer regards men or things by the common standards of the world. Even his appreciation of Christ as his Saviour is no longer what it then was—"after the flesh," that is, of an external kind; it has been exchanged for a profoundly spiritual recognition of His glory. He has become the disciple of a Divine mysticism. He has a life quite distinct from the life of the senses or the life of the intellect. He can say of himself, "I live; and yet no longer I, but Christ liveth in me." St. Paul claims to have passed into a new region of spiritual life. He claims to have dispensed with a view of Christ's work which, true no doubt in itself, still fell far short of that to which he had now attained. Looking back upon his past career, and comparing his former with his present knowledge of his Saviour, he could liken the change to nothing less than a new creation: "If any man is in Christ, he is a new creature: the old things are passed away; behold, they are become new."

2. The words of the Authorized Version do not represent accurately the original passage. The words, as written by St. Paul, are not "Old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new," but "Old things are passed away; behold, they are become new." St. Paul does not speak of an obliteration of the past, but of a renewal of the past. The old things themselves have become new. The old was gone, not because it had been blotted out, but because it had reappeared under a purer, nobler, more excellent form. God's law, as seen in the building up of the Christian life and Christian society, was the same law as might be discerned in all the work of His hands. Transformation, not destruction, is the rule of His operation.

You may trace that law, as some have thought, in that creation of which the first chapter of Genesis contains the record. The first creation fell into wasteness and crumbled into ruin; but out of its ruins was built up that world of order and beauty which we inhabit. Old things passed away; behold, they became new. You may trace that law, scientific observers will tell you, throughout the material universe. No matter perishes; no force is lost. The particles which constituted one body may be

fashioned anew to constitute another. The force which we know as heat may be known under another name as motion or electricity; but the matter never perishes, the force never decays. The old has passed away; behold, it is become new. You may trace that law in the vegetable world, when the corn of wheat falls into the ground and dies only to emerge again, first in the green blade and then in the golden ear, the same and yet how different. The old has passed away; behold, it is become new. You may trace the law in that most wonderful of transformations, when the crawling, unsightly worm, whose house and world have been a leaf, bursts from its chrysalis-tomb, clothed with beauty and splendour, to spread its dazzling wings in the summer's sun, and to feed where it will on the choicest sweets of the summer's flowers. This eternal law shall be seen, we are assured, hereafter, when our human bodies, having turned to corruption, shall be raised anew, the same not in identity of substance but in identity of form, when that which was sown a natural body shall be raised a spiritual body, and that which was sown in corruption shall be raised in incorruption. And the change of the individual shall be repeated throughout God's visible creation, and there shall be new heavens and a new earth, new not by destruction but by transformation, and fitted for their new and transformed inhabitants.

¶ To those in Christ all things are not only new, but they are growing continually newer. In the old world, and with the old man, it is just the other way. Things are always getting older, until life gets to be an insufferable burden, a dreary round, a wretched repetition, and we see backs bent with nothing but pure sorrow, and heads white with none other sickness than vexation of spirit, and men brought to the grave because life was too wearisome, and time too intolerable, and existence too aimless and stale, to be supported any longer. But in the new world, and with the new man, the whole is reversed; and the new cry ever waxes more frequent and more loud. "Look, and look again, how the old is passing, how the new is coming, how things are getting new." Every day more of the old is weeded out, more of the new is coming in. Life is "fresher and freer" and fuller of promise. There are new discoveries of the Father's love, new revelations of Christ's grace, new experiences of the Spirit's comfort. Life becomes interesting, and entertaining, and significant, and splendid, and grand beyond belief. What views of life

Christ's world contains; what heavens of expansion overarch it; what hills of attainment are reared upon it; what distances of outlook are discernible from it! Yourself, Christ, God—what thoughts about them all you could never have conceived before! History, Time, Eternity—what feelings they stir in you, you never could have felt before! Purpose, Progress, Achievement—what mighty motions of the will they produce![1]

3. Now the principle here laid down by the Apostle is one of the greatest importance when regarded as a principle of reconciliation between opposing tendencies. For both political parties and religious parties may be said, as a rule, to range themselves respectively under the banners of the past and of the future. "Old things" is the watchword of the one; "new things" is the watchword of the other. The one would try to resuscitate the past, would cherish it, even in its fossilized forms would try to galvanize it into life; the other would sweep away its every vestige, or leave it only as a subject of curious inquiry to the archæologist, or of inspiration to the poet. The one dislikes all change; the other thinks that no change can be too radical and too sweeping. The one hugs the shore or keeps to the harbour; the other riots in the tumult of winds and waves, if only a new world may be given to its eager quest and dauntless courage. But both these extreme parties are alike at war with the very constitution of the world. You cannot stereotype any phase of human existence. Change is God's law; progress is God's law.

¶ The claim of a new thing to be old is, in varying degrees, a common characteristic of great movements. The Reformation professed to be a return to the Bible, the Evangelical movement in England a return to the Gospels, the High Church movement a return to the early Church. A large element, even in the French Revolution, the greatest of all breaches with the past, had for its ideal a return to the Roman republican virtue or to the simplicity of the natural man. I noticed quite lately a speech of an American Progressive leader claiming that his principles were simply those of Abraham Lincoln.[2]

4. "The old things are passed away"; and quite rightly we are slow to see it. He has little sense of holiness who tramples on

[1] R. W. Barbour, *Thoughts*, 130.

[2] Gilbert Murray, *Four Stages of Greek Religion*, 58.

the past, or scorns the words of those whom God has taken from us. Yet the old things do pass away, and often silently. We seem to wake of a sudden to find that the old hand has lost its cunning, the old custom is turned to wrong, the old teaching emptied of its living force. Then what are we to do? We have a carnal craving for something fixed in this world, some rock of adamant on which the storms of time shall beat in vain. Meaner men simply will not take the trouble to give up the old things. The foolish mother would like her baby to be always little; the stupid politician shrinks from needful reform; the cowardly Christian looks out for a master upon earth, or hides himself among the trees of dogma, that no fresh voice from heaven may unsettle the thing he is pleased to call his faith.

All purely natural things must pass away. The beauty of our childhood fades, the proud powers of our manhood fail us, and words that were spirit and life to our fathers are empty sounds to us whom God has changed. Who cares now for the battle-cry of the Crusaders? The old things are passed away, and the glory seems departed with them from the earth. We look wistfully to the culture of Greece, the splendour of Rome, the fervour of the early Christians, the simple faith of the Middle Ages, the strong righteousness of Puritanism; but we can no more recall them than we can wake the dead. They have passed away for ever, and we must face as we best can the work of a world which without them seems cheerless and commonplace.

Passing away, saith the World, passing away:
Chances, beauty, and youth, sapped day by day:
Thy life never continueth in one stay.
Is the eye waxen dim, is the dark hair changing to grey
That hath won neither laurel nor bay?
I shall clothe myself in Spring and bud in May:
Thou, root-stricken, shalt not rebuild thy decay
On my bosom for aye.
Then I answered: Yea.

Passing away, saith my Soul, passing away:
With its burden of fear and hope, of labour and play,
Hearken what the past doth witness and say:
Rust in thy gold, a moth is in thine array,
A canker is in thy bud, thy leaf must decay.

At midnight, at cockcrow, at morning, one certain day
Lo the Bridegroom shall come and shall not delay;
Watch thou and pray.
Then I answered: Yea.

Passing away, saith my God, passing away:
Winter passeth after the long delay:
New grapes on the vine, new figs on the tender spray,
Turtle calleth turtle in Heaven's May.
Though I tarry, wait for Me, trust Me, watch and pray:
Arise, come away, night is past and lo it is day,
My love, My sister, My spouse, thou shalt hear Me say.
Then I answered: Yea.[1]

5. "The old things are passed away; behold, they are become new." This is God's law of change. They leave us only to return in other shapes; they vanish only to come back in nobler forms. God never takes away but that He may give us more abundantly. He takes away the innocence of childhood that He may give us the old man's crown of glory. He takes away the fathers we leaned on and the children in whom we garnered up our love that He may be Himself the Father of the fatherless and the hope of them that are desolate. He takes away the guides we trusted, the friends who were our very life, that He may be Himself our guide and ever-living Friend. He unsettles the simple belief of ignorance that He may give us the nobler faith of them that know. He smites with emptiness the burning words which stirred our fathers that He may give us other words of deeper meaning and of yet more thrilling call. Nothing that is good can perish. Though He sift it as corn is sifted in a sieve, yet shall not the least grain fall upon the earth. The dross of our thoughts shall perish; but the word of our God which came to us will embody itself again in worthier forms. Through all the changing scenes of history His call remains the same—Come upward hither, and I will show thee of My glory.

But it is needful to look at God's manner of making new Sometimes the change comes with a mighty destruction and the crack of doom. But has the old really perished? Is anything that was precious in the earth or the heaven of the old time taken clean away out of our reach? The answer lies in the Bibles

[1] Christina G. Rossetti, *Poems*, 191.

which we hold in our hands. They have an Old Testament as well as a New. Adam's earth is ours. David's heaven is ours. Israel after the flesh has grown into Israel after the spirit. We cannot neglect the Scriptures of the Old Covenant without misreading the Scriptures of the New Covenant. It was Christ's coming that made the law to cease, and rendered useless part at least of the office of the prophets. Yet Christ Himself said, "Think not that I came to destroy the law or the prophets: I came not to destroy but to fulfil." That in them which He did seem to destroy had, in fact, already died a natural death, for its work was done; but in making all things new He brought life and immortality into the old. And even so must they in each generation strive to act who follow in His steps.

¶ All around, in those well-ordered precincts, were quiet signs of wealth, and a noble taste—a taste, indeed, chiefly evidenced in the selection and juxtaposition of the material it had to deal with, consisting almost exclusively of the remains of older art, here arranged and harmonized, with effects, both as regards colour and form, so delicate, as to seem really derivative from a spirit fairer than any which lay within the resources of the ancient world. It was the old way of true *Renaissance*, the way of nature with her roses, the Divine way with the body of man, and it may be with his very soul—conceiving the new organism, by no sudden and abrupt creation, but rather by the action of a new principle upon elements all of which had indeed lived and died many times. The fragments of older architecture, the mosaics, the spiral columns, the precious corner stones of immemorial building, had put on, by such juxtaposition, a new and singular expressiveness, an air of grave thought and intellectual purpose.[1]

(1) *The principle is seen in History.*—If Greece has perished, she remains a light to the world. If Rome's eternal throne is cast down, her witness to right and law is imperishable. If the old saints are mouldered into dust, their spirit lives among us in many a patient toiler of whom the world is not worthy—more prosaic, it may be, but no way less heroic than that which dared the cross and the fire in the olden time. If Puritanism has passed away, it has left us many of the best features of English life—the sober earnestness, the civil freedom, the Sunday rest, the quiet sense of duty which labours to unloose the bands of wickedness and to

[1] Walter Pater, *Marius the Epicurean.*

undo the heavy burdens of all that suffer wrong. The more appalling the world-wide scene of change, decay and ruin, the more certainly a power of life is working upward through it all.

¶ The great empires of the East passed away, but not before they had transmitted to the people of God the treasures of their civilization. Greece fell; Rome fell: but in other forms they survive still. Let us only think what we owe in our own intellectual life, and in the expression of our religious faith, to Greece; think what we owe in our civil and ecclesiastical organization to Rome; and perhaps we shall be inclined to confess with a new conviction that "the dead rule the living," and recognize, humbled at once and stirred by the grandeur of our obligation, that God has placed the future in our hands.[1]

(2) *It is seen in the history of the Church.*—Whilst it is God's law in creation and God's law in the history of man that old things pass away because they become new, this is true in the highest sense of the great work of human redemption. Look at the history of that redemption. When man fell, what was the Divine method? Did God blot out the rebellious race, and create another race upon the earth? No; out of the ruin of human nature a new and more glorious fabric was revealed; Christ the Son of God, the second Adam, was promised, and came in the likeness of sinful flesh. The bitter waters of the natural fountain were changed into sweet. A ruin was made the material of the new and better structure. The old became new. Mankind, which fell in the first Adam, was built up in the second Adam, Jesus Christ, God manifest in the flesh. And as God revealed Himself, first to patriarchs and then to Moses, the law-giver of the Old Covenant, and then to prophets who were interpreters of His will, there were elements of the earlier dispensation which were perpetuated in the next. The patriarchal nearness to God, the vision of the Almighty, did not cease when God went before His people in a pillar of cloud and in a pillar of flame. The Tabernacle was perpetuated in the Temple, the rites and ceremonies of the law were not abrogated but spiritualized by the prophets. And when St. Paul would find the great proof of his doctrine of justification by faith, he goes back to the ancient dispensation. Abraham is its great example; the prophet Habakkuk waiting upon God, when the Chaldæan armies were

[1] B. F. Westcott, *Christian Aspects of Life*, 89.

approaching, gives him the words which are the key-note of his gospel. But the old had become new. For Jesus Christ had come in the flesh, revealed as the great object of faith; and the true life of faith was life in union with Christ. And our Lord Himself teaches the same lesson. "Think not that I came to destroy the law or the prophets: I came not to destroy, but to fulfil." The Jewish priesthood perished, the Jewish sacrifices were abolished, the Jewish Temple was levelled with the ground, but their Divine meaning was fulfilled in Christ, and abides in Him and in His people to the present hour.

¶ The Latin church left its work of witnessing and ministering for Christ, and made itself a judge and a divider among men. Its doctrines were all poisoned by one colossal blasphemy. It required what God has never asked even for Himself—to be believed without regard to reason, and obeyed without regard to conscience. So the yoke of Christian Pharisaism had to be broken, that men might be free to serve God in spirit and truth. The unspiritual unity of Western Europe had to be shattered in pieces, that nations might escape the tyranny of an alien and sectarian church. Above all, the idea of an infallible church holding plenary powers from an absent king had to be rooted out before men could begin to see the gradual development which is God's word to successive generations. But an infallible church is also incorrigible: therefore He cut her in sunder, and appointed her portion with the hypocrites. The seventeenth and eighteenth centuries were the after-swell of the storm; and only the nineteenth was free to take up the work which the Reformation made possible even in countries where it was rejected. That work is hardly more than begun; but we can already see its character. Our losses are no doubt immense. The old social order is gone, the old conception of miracle and inspiration is overthrown, and a growing tangle of practical questions represents the growing complexity of life and thought. But is there no gain in our wider knowledge of truth? in a more strenuous and earnest life? in a quickened hatred of social wrong? in a higher tone of that national conscience which under any form of government speaks the final word? Is it nothing to know Christ as He never was known before? to see the realms of grace and nature joined in their incarnate Lord? to be made free from the horror of past ages, the inscrutable despot far off in heaven, who sought some other glory than the highest welfare of His creatures? No heavier burden has been lifted from men since the Gospel swept away the whole slavery of gods and saints and demons, and left

us face to face with the risen Son of Man who hears the prayer of all flesh from His throne on high.[1]

The Master stood upon the mount, and taught.
He saw a fire in His disciples' eyes;
"The old law," they said, "is wholly come to nought,
Behold the new world rise!"

"Was it," the Lord then said, "with scorn ye saw
The old law observed by Scribes and Pharisees?
I say unto you, see *ye* keep that law
More faithfully than these!

"Too hasty heads for ordering worlds, alas!
Think not that I to annul the law have will'd;
No jot, no tittle from the law shall pass,
Till all have been fulfill'd."

So Christ said eighteen hundred years ago.
And what then shall be said to those to-day,
Who cry aloud to lay the old world low
To clear the new world's way?

"Religious fervours! ardour misapplied!
Hence, hence," they cry, "ye do but keep man blind!
But keep him self-immersed, preoccupied,
And lame the active mind!"

Ah! from the old world let some one answer give:
"Scorn ye this world, their tears, their inward cares?
I say unto you, see that *your* souls live
A deeper life than theirs!"

Here let that voice make end; then, let a strain,
From a far lonelier distance, like the wind
Be heard, floating through heaven, and fill again
These men's profoundest mind:

"Children of men! the unseen Power, whose eye
For ever doth accompany mankind,
Hath look'd on no religion scornfully
That men did ever find.

[1] H. M. Gwatkin, *The Eye for Spiritual Things*, 54.

"Which has not taught weak wills how much they can?
Which has not fall'n on the dry heart like rain?
Which has not cried to sunk, self-weary man:
*Thou must be born again!*

"Children of men! not that your age excel
In pride of life the ages of your sires,
But that *ye* think clear, feel deep, bear fruit well,
The Friend of man desires."[1]

(3) *It is seen in the life of the Individual.*—That which is true of the great redemptive work of Christ in the world is true no less of His redemptive work in every soul of man. Here there is ever change, here there is ever progress; but here there is no destruction except of that which has been corrupted through sin. The grace of God in Jesus Christ is indeed a mighty power in the heart. The conversion of a sinner to God is indeed nothing less than a turning from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God. But even where that change has been as marked, as sudden, as decisive as it was in St. Paul, there is no obliteration of past history or past character. New affections are not given, but the old affections are made new, because they are turned to a new object, because they are purified, strengthened, elevated. The trust which once leaned upon earthly props is now fixed upon God and His Christ; the hope which once was bounded by the narrow horizon of time is now full of immortality and embraces eternity in its arms. The love which once was idolatry of some human object has now found its legitimate satisfaction in Him whose love passeth knowledge. A new intellect is not given, but the old intellect is made new, because it now finds its highest exercise, not in science or art or literature, though it despises none of these things, but in the study of the revelation of God. A new character is not given, but the old character is sanctified to a higher use. Energy becomes devotion to God; impetuosity, zeal in His service; resolution, loyalty to Christ Jesus. And so long as life lasts, the perpetual transformation is going on.

¶ We are slowly, very slowly, abandoning our belief in sudden and violent transitions for a surer and fuller acceptance of the

[1] Matthew Arnold, *Poems*, ii. 169.

doctrine of evolution; but most of us still draw a sharp line of demarcation between this world and the next, and expect a radical change in ourselves and our surroundings, a break in the chain of continuity entirely contrary to the teaching of nature and experience. In the same way we cling to the specious untruth that we can begin over and over again in this world, forgetting that while our sorrow and repentance bring sacramental gifts of grace and strength, God Himself cannot, by His own limitation, rewrite the Past. We are in our sorrow that which we have made ourselves in our sin; our temptations are there as well as the way of escape. We are in the image of God. We create our world, our undying selves, our heaven, or our hell. *Qui creavit te sine te non salvabit te sine te.* It is stupendous, magnificent, and most appalling. A man does not change as he crosses the threshold of the larger room. His personality remains the same, although the expression of it may be altered.[1]

¶ There were some rough diamonds among the converts; but if they were rough they were diamonds still. One man, a bricklayer's labourer, could not read a chapter of the Bible without a mistake in every line. Yet for fifteen years he attended the Sunday morning prayer-meeting at seven o'clock, often conducting it, and praying with such fervour and power that my father felt the influence of his prayers upon his ministry to be exceptional, if not unique. A woman, who in the early days of his work among the pig-feeders of Notting Dale held up in his face a quart pot of beer and laughed at him with words of scornful obscenity, was attracted to the Tabernacle, was soundly converted to Jesus Christ, and was thenceforward a living monument of the most winsome Christian goodness. It was with special reference to her that my father wrote: "I believe we had as real and noble a company of praying women as ever they had in the apostolic days." Another woman was a member of a little colony of gypsies who often encamped upon some waste ground not far away from the Tabernacle. Herself led to the feet of Jesus by my father's ministry, she brought several others to hear him preach, and among those of them who were converted were three brothers—the father and two uncles of the now famous evangelist, Gypsy Smith. My father baptized them—I can myself remember the scene—with peculiar and exultant joy.[2]

¶ In his *Confessions* St. Augustine has left record in literature of a profligate and shameful past, of a deep repentance and flight to God for succour, and of a grand recovery alike to moral obedi-

[1] Michael Fairless, *The Roadmender*, 79.
[2] *Henry Varley's Life-Story*, 69.

ence and to splendid service. The profligate of Carthage, steeped in degrading animalism, becomes in Rome the first of the four great Latin Fathers of the Church, exercising an influence on Christian thought and life second only to that of the Apostle Paul. In this case, as in many others which might be recorded, the springs of action were not lamed by the memory of a mournful past, but rather quickened into finer intensity and more strenuous endeavour. Shakespeare had dared to say:

Best men are moulded out of faults.

There is blue sky in front of us if in the memory of any guilty act we feel that we would rather die than repeat it. To have erred in the past does not condemn us to degradation in the future. The soul, though deeply stained, may be cleansed and regain its purity, if not its innocence. Again and yet again He who "knoweth our frame, and remembereth that we are dust" takes us by the hand and says "Start afresh." With God, and hope, and to-morrow, we may mock the counsels of despair. It is inevitable that some error should creep into our lives, for we are but human. Let the bitterness of past failure sting us into nobler action in the present, and the weakness revealed urge us to supplication for diviner strength. We have at least gained through defeat a fuller knowledge of ourselves. Our self-confidence has been rebuked, and we have learned the special perils, the besetting sins, against which we need to guard. Says Browning:

When the fight begins within himself,
A man's worth something.

He is tried that he may triumph. He wrestles that he may be crowned.[1]

[1] R. P. Downs, *Beaten Gold*, 148.

# Ambassadors for Christ.

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## Ambassadors for Christ.

**We are ambassadors therefore on behalf of Christ, as though God were intreating by us : we beseech you on behalf of Christ, be ye reconciled to God.—2 Cor. v. 20.**

1. The ministry is one of the original elements of historic Christianity. From the beginning there have been duly appointed ministers in the Church. The ministry was implied in the constitution of the Christian Society. No thoughtful student of the Gospels can doubt that the ultimate origin of the ministry must be traced to Christ Himself. From the start the Church has taken the form of an ordered society. The earliest Christian writings we possess indicate the existence of an authorized and accepted ministry. The ministry takes rank with the two Sacraments, the Lord's Day, the Scripture, as an original and therefore essential element of historic Christianity. The earliest Christian document we possess is the First Epistle to the Thessalonians, and there we encounter the ministry as a settled thing. "We beseech you, brethren, to know them that labour among you, and are over you in the Lord, and admonish you; and to esteem them exceeding highly in love for their work's sake."

2. The Christian ministry has, in the course of history, fulfilled itself in many ways. The methods of one age have not been the methods of another. The clergy have been variously organized; the Christian Society has run a parallel course to the State. There has been continuity of government in and through changes of system; for the standing necessities which government exists to meet never change, though the actual forms in which they must be met are never long the same. Every generation comes fresh to its problems, and has to learn the lesson of duty, and submit itself to the yoke of discipline. The proper and inalienable services of the Christian ministry will never be superfluous. The

unseen world is too closely pressed by the world of sight and sense to vindicate its claim to human regard. There is need for Christ's testimony being taken up, uttered in intelligible terms of the age, applied in actual life, pressed home by authoritative voices, illustrated by consecrated characters.

¶ As an ambassador for Christ, I regard a preacher of the gospel as filling the most responsible office any mortal can occupy His pulpit is, in my eyes, loftier than a throne; and of all professions, learned or unlearned, his, though usually in point of wealth the poorest, I esteem the most honourable. That office is one angels themselves might covet.[1]

## I.

### An Ambassador is a Commissioner.

The word "Ambassador" is one of great dignity. It is common among the ancient writers. In Luke xiv. 32, Jesus tells of one king who, "while the other is yet a great way off, sendeth an ambassage, and asketh conditions of peace." St. Paul is fully conscious of the great commission which he bears from God on behalf of Christ. In a word, St. Paul, as all ministers are, is God's spokesman to men. He comes with authoritative word as the ambassador from the Court of Heaven to plead the cause of Christ with men whom God so loved that He gave His Son to die for them.

1. The commission is from God, and the ambassador owes his standing to Divine authority. What is it that makes a man an ambassador of the king? It is not that he chooses or wishes to be so, or that he is clothed in a certain robe, or is a member of a certain family; but it is solely and exclusively that he has the commission of his sovereign. What is it that makes a man a minister of Christ? Not any form or ceremonial, however beautiful and good; not ordination by presbyter or bishop, however useful and proper in its place; but the commission of the King of kings, the Lord Jesus Christ. In other words, the minister of the gospel is here said to sustain to Christ, the heavenly King, pre-

[1] Thomas Guthrie, in *Memoir*, i. 272.

cisely the relationship which an earthly ambassador sustains to an earthly monarch; and if none can make an ambassador but the sovereign, so none can constitute a man a minister of Christ but He who rules by His power, inspires by His wisdom, and creates faith by His grace. Whatever rites of ordination are proper for the public declaration and consecration of those who are the ministers of Christ, the minister is assumed to have been first called by the Holy Spirit. He is ordained, not that he may be made a minister, but because he has been set apart for that great office. An ambassador of the king, when he goes to a foreign court to reside, does not there make law, but simply executes the commission entrusted to him; he does not declare and define the terms of communion between his own kingdom and another, but simply declares what is the will of his sovereign, or his government, in reference to that other country. So a minister of the gospel is not to make law, but to preach law already made; he is not to make a sacrifice, but to proclaim a sacrifice already furnished; he is not to set up a rule of faith, but to call attention to a rule of faith already complete. That ambassador best discharges the duties entrusted to him by his sovereign who expresses least of his own mind, and most clearly the sovereign's mind; and that minister best discharges the duties which he owes to God who gives the least of human conjectures, and who declares most plainly and distinctly the will and word of the Lord Jesus Christ.

¶ There is one condition before any man can deliver such a message as this; it is, first, that he should have had it delivered to his own soul. Unless the message has within it that reality which only comes from its being a real part of your own life, a great deal of what you are saying must inevitably be words, and nothing else. If there be any truth that you are setting forth of which it is possible for you to say, "Had it been untrue I should have been just the same as I am," then depend upon it such a belief as that is not a belief that would enable you to impress the truth upon your people—it is not a belief that will enable you to be a real ambassador of Christ to deliver that message. Spiritual teaching must be backed up by truth of life, or else it loses its power.[1]

2. The substance of the commission is this: "Be ye reconciled to God." To sue for love, to beg that an enemy will put away his

[1] *Frederick Temple, Archbishop of Canterbury*, i. 408.

enmity is the part of the inferior rather than of the superior, is the part of the offender rather than of the offended; is the part of the vanquished rather than of the victor; is the part, surely, not of the king but of the rebel. And yet here, in the sublime transcending of all human precedent and pattern which characterizes the Divine dealing, we have the places of the suppliant and of the supplicated inverted, and Love upon the Throne bends down to ask of the rebel that lies powerless and sullen at His feet, and yet is not conquered until his heart be won, though his limbs be manacled, that he would put away all the bitterness out of his heart, and come back to the love and the grace which are ready to pour over him. "He that might the vengeance best have taken, finds out the remedy." He against whom we have transgressed prays us to be reconciled; and the Infinite Love lowers Himself in the lowering which is, in another aspect, the climax of His exaltation, to pray the rebels to accept His amnesty.

Conceive a king with an overwhelming power—furnished with everything to command success, able, at any moment, to crush the rebellious force which had outraged him in every possible way—just on the eve of taking the most complete vengeance, at the very height of his supremacy, and in the moment of the surest confidence of his victory, sending forth a flag of truce to the enemy—and in the most suppliant and endearing terms, for no advantage of his own, but entirely for that enemy's sake—beseeching an embassy and a reconciliation. Conceive that the result of that proposition, if accepted, is nothing less than the elevation of that pardoned state, to all the privileges and dignities which its captor could bestow, even to the position of equality with his own dearest and most obedient children. Conceive that so dear was this reconciliation to that all-conquering monarch, that, to compass it, he spared not his dearest and his best, and that even when his well-beloved son had been murdered by the treachery of those to whom he was bearing the white flag of his father's clemency, still he continued to send forth more messengers with the same offers, and never ceased to use all the arguments, and to take on himself the suitor's part, as though he were the guilty one! What an unparalleled passage that would be in the history of man! And yet, what is that to the grandeur of this simple fact here set forth, "We are ambassadors therefore on behalf of Christ,

as though God were intreating by us: we beseech you on behalf of Christ, be ye reconciled to God"?

¶ I read the other day that a father in Watford last year was greatly troubled about his son, who had gone wrong, and who was now ill and despondent and wrote to him, very tremblingly and fearfully, as if to ask whether there was any hope. The father sent a telegram to him, and the telegram consisted of one word; the one word was "Home," and it was signed "Father." Now the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ is God's telegram to the sinful world, summed up in one word, "Home," and signed by one name, "Father."[1]

3. The message is for all men. The supplement which stands in our Authorized Version in this text is a misleading and unfortunate one. "As though God did beseech *you*" and "we pray *you*" unduly narrow the scope of the Apostolic message, and confuse the whole course of the Apostolic reasoning here. For he has been speaking of a world which is reconciled to God, and he finds a consequence of that reconciliation of the world in the fact that he and his fellow-preachers are entrusted with the word of reconciliation. The scope of their message, then, can be no narrower than the scope of the reconciliation; and, inasmuch as that is world-wide, the beseeching must be co-extensive therewith, and must cover the whole ground of humanity. It is a universal message that is set forth here. The Corinthians, to whom St. Paul was speaking, are, by his hypothesis, already reconciled to God, and the message which he has in trust for them is given in the subsequent words: "We then, as workers together with God, beseech you also that ye receive not the grace of God in vain." But the message, the pleading of the Divine heart, "be ye reconconciled to God," is a pleading that reaches over the whole range of a reconciled world.

¶ In 1854, when the British fleet was lying in Nagasaki Bay, the Japanese Government was extremely anxious that we should not land, and General Wakasa was appointed to watch the fleet and to prevent the British troops from landing. It happened that, as he rowed about the bay in fulfilment of his duty, some careless sailor on one of those English men-of-war had dropped his New Testament overboard. Probably he cared very little for his New Testament and he parted with it without any regret.

[1] R. F. Horton, *How the Cross Saves*, 102.

But it so happened that General Wakasa picked it up out of the sea, and he was curious to know what this book was. He got an interpreter to tell him what it was. He became interested in it. He procured a Chinese New Testament and read it through—it brought him to Christ. Twelve years later General Wakasa came down to Verbeck, the missionary, and asked to be baptized because he had found the Saviour. Your British sailor let his New Testament fall into the sea, but that New Testament converted the General of the Japanese army, and his family, and the whole circle of his friends, and planted the blessed truth of reconciliation in the islands of Japan. That is the logic of missions. The first duty is to let the world know, and let every race of men know, to have it in every language, to put it within reach of every human being, that God is "in Christ reconciling the world unto himself."[1]

4. To turn a deaf ear to this message is to incur great guilt. It is an awful and solemn power that every poor little speck of humanity has, to lift itself up in God's face, and say, in answer to all His pleadings, "I will not!" as if the dwellers in some little island, a mere pin-point of black, barren rock, jutting up at sea, were to declare war against a kingdom that stretched through twenty degrees of longitude on the mainland. So we, on our little bit of island, our pin-point of rock in the great waste ocean, can separate ourselves from the great Continent; or, rather, God has, in a fashion, made us separate in order that we may either unite ourselves with Him, by our willing yielding, or wrench ourselves away from Him by our antagonism and rebellion.

God cannot prise open a man's heart with a crowbar, as it were, and force Himself inside. The door opens from within. "Behold! I stand at the door and knock." There is an "if." "If any man open I will come in." Hence the beseeching, hence the wail of wisdom that cries aloud and no man regards it; of love that stands at the entering in of the city, and pleads in vain, and says, "I have called, and ye have refused. . . . How often would I have gathered . . . and ye would not."

> We heard his footfall on the vacant stair
> The whole night long. We lay awake in bed
> And heard him climb;—but those who slept instead
> Smiled and assured us that he was not there.

[1] R. F. Horton, *How the Cross Saves*, 109.

We had our own important things to care
About—place, profit and the daily bread;
And then the street so thundered in one's head
And often life's a commonplace affair!
Yet then we heard him!—we not they were right:
We heard him—Yes! tho' now we sleep by night
Almost as soundly as we sleep by day,
We waked, we heard him, heard—and nothing more.[1]

## II.

### An Ambassador is a Representative.

1. An ambassador has no independent position, no independent authority. What he is, he is because he represents the king or nation which has commissioned him to bear their message. Instructions are given him, and he must not exceed them. The terms he proposes, the plans he communicates, have been settled beforehand, and they are not his own. He is the mouthpiece of others. He mediates between kings or nations, because he represents one king or one nation to another. To put the ambassador in the place of his king or nation would be a gross perversion of the truth. To put the minister in the place of Christ would be equally gross. And yet the minister does represent Christ, does mediate between his people and Christ, for he speaks in his Master's name.

We are ambassadors not only "for Christ," but "on Christ's behalf." And the same preposition is repeated in the subsequent clause. "We pray you," not merely "in Christ's stead," though that is much, but "on His account," which is more—as if it lay very near His heart that we should put away our enmity; and as if in some transcendent and wonderful manner the all-perfect, self-sufficing God was made glad, and the Master, who is His image for us, "saw of the travail of his soul, and," in regard to one man, "was satisfied," when the man lets the warmth of God's love in Christ thaw away the coldness out of his heart, and kindle there an answering flame. An old divine says, "We cannot do God a greater pleasure, or more oblige His very heart, than to trust in Him as a God of love."

[1] G. C. Lodge, *Poems and Dramas*, ii. 152.

¶ There is one absolute essential to successful preaching and to beneficial hearing—firm faith that it is God's own appointed plan for the conversion of souls, and that He never will withhold the blessing when it is earnestly sought. The moment you allow the mind to fix itself solely and exclusively on the human element in preaching—the man, the talent, the oratory—you miss the good of preaching. The way to regard it is this: to look upon the man as but the machine in God's hand, doing God's work. Then you reap the benefit; because you listen reverently, patiently, receptively. This is far too little enforced and far too little understood.[1]

¶ The clergyman is not simply an officer or servant of God or workman of God, but His ambassador and herald to tell men about God Himself. He must bring distinctly before men the reality of the heaven of which the earth and all that it contains is but the symbol and vesture. And, since all human teaching is but the purging of the ear to hear God's teaching, and since the whole man, and not certain faculties only, must enter into the Divine presence, the sacraments must be the centre and crown (I don't mean central subject) of his teaching, for there the real heights and depths of heaven are most fully revealed, and at the same time the commonest acts and things of earth are most closely and clearly connected with the highest heaven. This is, briefly, my view of a clergyman's work; and by this, I think, must the nature of the Spirit's inward motion be determined.[2]

2. The Christian ambassador must spare no pains to be a true copy of the Master whom he represents. David Brainerd was a young American missionary to the Red Indians. Weak and ill in body he died at twenty-nine, but what a noble history he left. He travelled, in spite of suffering, four thousand miles a year, through woods, over mountains and rivers. At night he lay out in the open woods, or in log and turf huts. He ate the Indians' coarse food, learned their strange language, and preached to them in their wigwams, full of smoke and filth, the Indians often laughing and drinking around. And he tells us why he so lived and suffered: first "to be conformed to Jesus in toil and suffering"; and second, "I cared not where or how I lived, or what hardships I went through, so that I could but win souls to Christ."

[1] *Dr. MacGregor of St. Cuthberts*, 97.
[2] F. J. A. Hort, in *Life and Letters*, i. 279.

¶ To one who asked MacGregor in the zenith of his power what were the things which stood behind his preaching, the answer was characteristically descriptive of what was felt by every listening hearer of his ministry: "All through, from the beginning, I have tried to be true to my colours—preaching Christ and Him crucified. The rock of my faith is the eternal Sonship of the Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ. All flows from that. Religion without that is a pithless, marrowless concern. On that I rest my own eternal hopes; on the work done for me; on Christ as the Redeemer of men; the love of God in sending His Son, in giving Him as a sacrifice for the sins of the world; the love of Christ in executing His Father's loving purpose; and the love and power of the Holy Ghost in applying the benefits which Christ secured for us." These doctrines he never preached with bated breath. "The clarion voice gave no uncertain call." A herald charged with a direct commission, he might fitly have begun and closed every one of his sermons with the words, "Thus saith the Lord."[1]

## III.

### An Ambassador is a Diplomatist.

1. The ambassador has to recommend his message. Everything, or almost everything, depends on address in the ambassador. What corresponds to this in the Christian minister? Why, the first element is character, and the second is character, and the third is character—the character and life of the minister of Christ, of the preacher of the gospel—a life of earnestness, of self-forgetfulness, of truthfulness, of singleness of purpose, of simplicity.

Diplomacy! What ideas do we not commonly connect with the word? Ambiguity, manœuvre, chicane, over-reaching, fraud. Not such must be our diplomacy. Only let people feel that we have a single heart and a single eye; only let them see that in all our words and all our acts we seek not theirs but them; not ourselves, but our work; not ourselves, but Christ Jesus our Lord; and the battle is already half won. Duplicity, untruthfulness, insincerity, self-assertion, self-seeking in any form—this it is which mars a man's influence.

[1] *Dr. MacGregor of St. Cuthberts*, 163.

¶ Remember how often Christ has said, "The Father has sent me. I am sent. I do the will of him who has sent me."

These words have always been obscure to me.

Only now has the simple, clear, and joyous meaning of these words been revealed to me. I arrived at the comprehension of them through doubt and suffering.

Their meaning is this, that Christ has taught all men the life which He considered the true one for Himself. But He considers His life an embassy, a fulfilment of the will of Him who sent Him.

But the will of Him who sent is the rational (good) life of the whole world. Consequently, it is the business of life to carry the truth into the world.

If I am God's messenger, my chief business does not only consist in fulfilling the commandments—they are only conditions under which I must fulfil the ambassadorship—but in living in such a way as to carry into the world with all means given me that truth which I know, that truth which is entrusted to me.

It may happen that I shall myself often be bad, that I shall be false to my mission; all this cannot for a moment destroy the meaning of my life: "To shine with that light which is in me, so long as I am able, so long as there is light in me."

The conviction of the ambassadorship has the following practical effect upon me (I speak for myself and, I know, for others also).

Outside the physical necessities, in which I try to confine myself to the least, as soon as I am drawn to some activity,—speaking, writing, working,—I ask myself (I do not even ask, I feel it) whether with this work I serve Him who sent me. I joyously surrender myself to the work and forget all doubts and—fly, like a stone, and am glad that I am flying.

But if the work is not for Him who has sent me, it does not even attract me, I simply feel ennui, and I only try to get rid of it, I try to observe all the rules given for messengers. But this does not even happen. It seems to me that a man can live in such a way as to sleep, or in such a way as with his whole soul, with delight, to serve Him who sent him.[1]

2. The ambassador must use the most persuasive modes of speech. He must entreat and beseech those to whom he is sent. It is, indeed, a strange thing that men should need beseeching to take what is the greatest good, and indeed the only good, that the human soul can gain—reconciliation with God. But it is a fact

[1] Tolstoy, *Thoughts and Aphorisms* (*Works*, xix. 100).

that all of us need beseeching, and most of us who have come to Christ have come because some dear voice entreated. And it is the duty of every Christian to use every art of entreaty, every sanctified art of entreaty—argument, reasoning, pleading—but also literally beseeching, wooing, winning, pleading with men to be reconciled to God.

Entreating and beseeching—these are wonderful words to use in regard to God's dealings with men. We can understand how fitting it is for man to beseech God for those Divine gifts without which he must perish. We can understand also that man should entreat God to be gracious unto him with strong crying and tears. But that God should beseech and Christ should entreat men to accept the greatest gifts is marvellous indeed. But such is the fact, such are the terms of a minister's commission. "We beseech you on behalf of Christ, be ye reconciled to God."

¶ There was put up in the town of Bedford, some twenty-five or thirty years ago, a statue to the memory of John Bunyan. On the pedestal of the statue are engraved these words: "It had eyes lifted up to Heaven, the best of books in his hand, the law of truth was written upon its lips, the world was behind his back; it stood as if it pleaded with men, and a crown of gold did hang over its head." This was the picture which Christian saw in the Interpreter's house, and this is the picture which the sculptor has sought to embody in his bronze. "It stood as if it pleaded with men"—what better picture could we have of the great Apostle? Thrice in the one short passage (v. 20–vi. 1) is the word of entreaty on his lips, with such tender solicitude did he urge upon his readers, and does he urge upon us, "Be ye reconciled to God."[1]

¶ It was after midnight that Jamie rose and crept to Leeby's bedside. Leeby was shaking the bed in her agony. Jess heard what they said.

"Leeby," said Jamie, "dinna greet, an' I'll never do't again."

He put his arms round her, and she kissed him passionately.

"Oh, Jamie," she said, "hae ye prayed to God to forgie ye?"

Jamie did not speak.

"If ye was to die this nicht," cried Leeby, "an' you no made it up wi' God, ye wouldna gang to heaven. Jamie, I canna sleep till ye've made it up wi' God."

But Jamie still hung back. Leeby slipped from her bed, and went down on her knees.

[1] G. Jackson, *Memoranda Paulina*, 261.

"O God, O dear God," she cried, "mak' Jamie to pray to you!"

Then Jamie went down on his knees too, and they made it up with God together.[1]

3. The ambassador must use all dispatch in executing his commission. He must be urgent as well as persuasive. "He who has before his mental eye the Four Last Things," says Newman, "will have the true earnestness, the horror, or the rapture, of one who witnesses a conflagration, or discerns some rich and sublime prospect of natural scenery. His countenance, his manner, his voice, speak for him, in proportion as his view has been vivid and minute. The great English poet has described this sort of eloquence when a calamity had befallen—

> Yea, this man's brow, like to a title-leaf,
> Foretells the nature of a tragic volume.
> Thou tremblest; and the whiteness in thy cheek
> Is apter than thy tongue to tell thy errand.[2]

¶ Bishop Paget writes from Priest Leys, to the Rev. G. S. Barrett, of Norwich, thanking him for his book, *Religion in Daily Life*:—

. . . "A friend of mine said to me once about my father-in-law [Dean Church] after an University sermon at Oxford: 'Well, at all events he has one great quality as a preacher—he makes one thoroughly uncomfortable';—and I am thankful for some thoroughly disturbing words of yours. And I am thankful, too, with all my heart, for the resolute gathering of all daily life, of all its relations and opportunities and tasks and phases and problems, into the light of our Lord's teaching, to be ruled by His demand and estimated by His standard:—together with the recurring witness to the gladness of a disciplined life, the rest that is hidden in the strenuousness of obedience."[3]

¶ Sometimes while preaching I have felt as if I could imitate that Roman ambassador who met a certain king, and told him that the Romans forbade him to advance farther. The king somewhat jested at the stern command of the Romans, but the ambassador stooped down, and with his stick drew a ring in the dust round the king, and said, "You must give your answer before you come out of that circle; for if you step over that line, the

[1] J. M. Barrie, *A Window in Thrums*, 174.
[2] J. H. Newman, *Idea of a University*.
[3] *Francis Paget, Bishop of Oxford*, 143.

Romans will accept it as a signal of war." I have sometimes felt, when preaching to this great congregation, as if there were some who had to decide for God or for the world before they stepped out of this place, for God's ambassador had, as it were, drawn a line all round them, and said to them, "Choose ye this day whom ye will serve. If the Lord be God, follow him: but if Baal, then follow him."[1]

[1] C. H. Spurgeon.

# The Sinless Made Sin.

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## The Sinless Made Sin.

**Him who knew no sin he made to be sin on our behalf; that we might become the righteousness of God in him.—2 Cor. v. 21.**

There are many to whom there is no dearer verse in the Book than this. But there are others who can only study it with knitted brows and puzzled minds. Sometimes perhaps they think they have glimpses of its meaning, but the momentary insight fades, and they are puzzled again. Their experience is like John Bunyan's in his groping days; he sometimes for his comfort got "sweet glances" at this and kindred verses; "But these words were but hints, touches and short visits, though very sweet when present: only they lasted not; but, like to Peter's sheet, and of a sudden were caught up from me to heaven again." Yet even if we do not always fully understand, we can feel somewhat of the tremendous import, and therefore of the tremendous importance, of a verse like this; its daring paradox seems to point us into the centre of things, and its passionate intensity moves our hearts to wonder and prayer.

Perhaps the verse is made somewhat easier if we are careful to distinguish between two things—one the *mannerism* of St. Paul and the other the *message* that lies behind the mannerism. St. Paul's style is often very direct, compressed and abrupt. And where some writer of looser method and less intense quality would put some word of connexion or of comparison, St. Paul dispenses with all connecting links and puts a bold identification. Take for the sake of clearness a parallel instance, which is all the clearer because it is two instances in one. In another place he says, "*Ye* were sometime darkness," not "in darkness," not "children of darkness," not "in bondage to darkness," but by a bold and direct identification, "ye were darkness." And then he goes on, "but now are ye light in the Lord"—not "ye have come into the light," nor "ye have been brought to see the light"; but

again by a bold and direct identification, "Now *are* ye light." Perhaps such a parallel case throws light upon St. Paul's method of expression here, where by an awfully daring identification, he speaks about Christ being *made sin* and ourselves being *made righteousness.*

With these introductory words we pass to the contents of the text. It contains two subjects.—

I. The Sinless made Sin.

II. The Sinner become Righteousness.

## I.

### The Sinless Made Sin.

1. "Him who knew no sin." That any man should be sinless was an idea quite alien to Jewish thought and belief; and therefore the emphasis given to it by St. Paul, and the absolutely unqualified way in which it is laid down in a letter addressed to a community containing not only friends but foes who would eagerly fasten on any doubtful statement, show that it must have been regarded as axiomatic among Christians at the early date when this Epistle was written.

It was Christ's own verdict upon Himself. He whose words search our very hearts, and bring to light unsuspected seeds of badness, never Himself betrays the faintest consciousness of guilt. He challenges His enemies directly—"Which of you convinceth me of sin?" It is the verdict of all sincere human souls, as uttered by the soldier who watched His cross—"Truly this was a righteous man." It is the verdict even of the great enemy who assailed Him again and again, and found nothing in Him, and whose agents recognized Him as the Holy One of God. Above all, it is the verdict of God. He was the beloved Son, in whom the Father was well pleased. For three-and-thirty years, in daily contact with the world and its sins, Christ lived and yet knew no sin. To His will and conscience it was a foreign thing. What infinite worth that sinless life possessed in God's sight! When He looked down to earth it was the one absolutely precious thing. Filled full of righteousness, absolutely well-pleasing in His eyes, it was worth more to God than all the world beside.

¶ Your friend asks, "When does Scripture mention the least impatience or any sin in the man Christ Jesus?" and then goes on to speak, with great horror, of my "awful notion" of admitting the germ of evil, etc., in Him. I presume this is a misconception of an expression which I have more than once used. Specially dwelling on the Redeemer's sinlessness, I have shown how all the innocent feelings of our nature were in Him, but stopped on the verge which separates the innocent from the wrong. An inclination of human nature is not wrong—hunger, anger—but being gratified unduly, or in forbidden circumstances, it passes into sin. "Be ye angry, and sin not." Legitimate anger was to stop short of sinful vindictiveness. Similarly, our Lord felt the weariness of life, and was anxious to have it done, amidst perpetual opposition of enemies and misconception of friends. "How am I straitened till it be accomplished?" "O faithless generation, how long shall I be with you? how long shall I suffer you?" There was no germ of sin in Christ; for sin is the acting of an evil will. Sin resides in the will, not in the natural appetites. There was no germ of sin in Him; but there were germs of feeling, natural and innocent, which show that He was in all points tempted like as we are.[1]

2. All sinless as Christ was, God made Him to be sin on our behalf. What does this mean? Not exactly that He made Him a sin-offering on our behalf. The expression for a sin-offering is different, and the parallelism with righteousness in the next clause forbids that reference here. The sin-offering of the Old Testament can at most have pointed towards and dimly suggested so tremendous an utterance as this; and the profoundest word of the New Testament cannot be adequately interpreted by anything in the Old. When St. Paul says, "Him that knew no sin God made sin," he must mean that in Christ on His cross, by Divine appointment, the extremest opposites met and became one—incarnate righteousness and the sin of the world. The sin is laid by God on the sinless One; its doom is laid on Him; His death is the execution of the Divine sentence upon it. When He dies, He has put away sin; it no longer stands, as it once stood, between God and the world. On the contrary, God has made peace by this great transaction; He has wrought out reconciliation: and its ministers can go everywhere with this awful appeal: "Receive the reconciliation: Him who knew no sin God hath made sin on

[1] *Life and Letters of F. W. Robertson*, 143.

our behalf, and there is henceforth no condemnation to them that are in Christ."

¶ Chrysostom makes the following comment on this verse: "What mind can represent these things? He made the righteous One a sinner, that He might make the sinners righteous. Rather this is not what he says, but something much greater. He says, not that He made Him a sinner, but that He made Him sin,—not only Him who had not sinned, but Him who did not know sin,—that we might be made (not righteous, but) righteousness, and the righteousness of God. For this is the righteousness of God, when we are justified, not by works (for in this case it is necessary that there should be no spot in them) but by grace in the blotting out of all sin. This does not permit us to be lifted up, for God freely gives us all and teaches us the greatness of the gift; because the former righteousness is that of the law and of works, but this is the righteousness of God."

3. If we look at the verses that precede we shall see that St. Paul's thoughts, as always when he treats of these great themes, were dwelling on the *identification* of Christ with sinful man. "One died for all, therefore all died," he says (verse 14); and those who are "in him" are new creatures, reconciled to God and living "not unto themselves, but unto him who for their sakes died and rose again." Hence it would seem that the phrase "made to be sin" must be understood in the light of this thought of identification. We may, perhaps, paraphrase the words thus: —"Jesus Christ, though sinless, identified Himself with us in our sinfulness, in order that we, though sinful, might be able to identify ourselves with Him in His righteousness."

Now this identification of Christ with sinful men is due to His intense sympathy. There was a time in our Lord's life on earth, we are told, when He met a man coming out of the tombs, whom no man could bind, "no, not with chains." That man was "possessed by an unclean spirit." Of all men upon earth, you would say that he was the one between whom and the pure and holy Jesus there must have existed the most thorough-going repugnance. What Pharisee who shrank from the filthy and loathsome words of that maniac could have experienced one-thousandth part of the inward and intense loathing which Christ must have experienced for the mind that those words expressed?

For it was into *that* He looked; *that* which He understood; *that* which in His inmost being He must have felt, which must have given Him a shock such as it could have given to no other. He must have felt the wickedness of that man in His inmost being. He must have been conscious of it, as no one else was or could be. Now, if we have ever had the consciousness, in a very slight degree, of evil in another man, has it not been, *up to that degree*, as if the evil were in ourselves? Suppose the offender were a friend, or a brother, or a child, has not this sense of personal shame, of the evil being ours, been proportionably stronger and more acute? However much we might feel ourselves called upon to act as judges, this perception still remained. It was not crushed even by the anger, the selfish anger, and the impatience of an injury done to us which, most probably, mingled with and corrupted the purer indignation and sorrow. Most of us confess with humiliation how little we have had of this lively consciousness of other men's impurity, or injustice, or falsehood, or baseness. But we *do* confess it; we know, therefore, that we should be better if we had more of it. In our best moments we admire with a fervent admiration—in our worse, we envy with a wicked envy—those in whom we trace most of it. And we have had just enough of it to be certain that it belongs to the truest and most radical part of the character, not to its transient impulses. Suppose, then, this carried to its highest point. Cannot you, at a great distance, apprehend that Christ may have entered into the sin of that poor maniac's spirit, may have had the most inward realization of it, not because it was like what was in Himself, but because it was utterly and intensely unlike? And yet are you not sure that this could not have been, unless He had the most perfect and thorough sympathy with this man, whose nature was transformed into the likeness of a brute, whose spirit had acquired the image of a devil? Does the co-existence of this sympathy and this antipathy perplex you? When we consider we see that they must dwell together in their highest degree, in their fullest power, in any one of whom we could say, "He is perfect; He is the standard of excellence." Diminish by one atom the loathing and horror, or the fellowship and sympathy, and by that atom you lower the character; you are sure that you have brought it nearer to the level of your own low imaginations; that you

have made it less like the Being who would raise you towards Himself.[1]

¶ Love is a principle essentially vicarious in its own nature, identifying the subject with others, so as to suffer their adversities and pains, and taking on itself the burden of their evils. It does not come in officiously and abruptly and propose to be substituted in some formal and literal way that overturns all the moral relations of law and desert, but it clings to the evil and lost man as in feeling, afflicted for him, burdened by his ill deserts, incapacities, and pains, encountering gladly any loss or suffering for his sake. Approving nothing wrong in him, but faithfully reproving and condemning him in all sin, it is yet made sin—plunged, so to speak, into all the fortunes of sin, by its friendly sympathy. In this manner it is entered vicariously into sacrifice on his account. So naturally and easily does the vicarious sacrifice commend itself to our intelligence, by the stock ideas and feelings out of which it grows.[2]

¶ There is a fine Welsh poem in which the poet imagines that the Sun, and all the attendant planets and satellites in his sphere, passed before the Great White Throne of the Creator; and as each passed, He smiled; but when Earth came to her turn, He blushed. We may couple with that a true story which was recently told of human sin and crime. A girl was brought before a board of guardians for immoral conduct of a very gross and aggravated kind; and, instead of showing any womanly shame, she was hard and brazen-faced. A lady who was on the board sat amongst the guardians, and her face was dyed crimson with shame. Though the girl showed no shame for herself, the lady felt it for her sin and her hardness; and as the girl caught sight of that pure, shame-cast face, she broke down in a flood of tears, and afterwards asked to be permitted to speak to her unknown friend. The incident led to the girl's ultimate reclamation. And when, according to the poet, we are told that God blushed as the Earth passed beneath His eye, may not his suggestion be coupled with this story, and may not the blush that suffused the face of Christ be also reflected from the face of Earth?[3]

I wandered forth to meet the rising sun.
To all infinity the snow lay bright
Beneath the dawn—a seamless garb of white
In God's own looms immaculately spun.

[1] F. D. Maurice. [2] Horace Bushnell, *The Vicarious Sacrifice*, 42.
[3] F. B. Meyer, *In the Beginning God*, 163.

Oh, spotless peace! Yet, ere an hour should run,
I knew that, with the broadening of the light,
The feet of man would mar that perfect sight,
And blot it wholly ere the day were done.

And, as I went, my heart was full of pain
To think of all man's deeds that would deface,
Ere set of sun, the glistening garb of grace:
Of truth that would be blotted with pretence,
And of the treachery that would print its stain
Upon the virgin snow of innocence.[1]

4. Sympathy has always an element of vicariousness in it, the more as it rises to the highest form of spiritual identification. Sympathy, by common consent one of the holiest and most influential forces in social life, is indeed itself a vicarious emotion. Its presence implies that we are putting ourselves into another man's place and participating in his experiences. By an act of imagination we bring our sensibilities into unison with kindred sensibilities in groups of sufferers, and so enter into their lot. There has been a mental substitution of our personality for that of a neighbour who is racked with pain, stricken by tragic bereavement, or wallowing in want and abject privation. It is quite possible we may suffer as much as the ill-fated victim himself, or even more, if his temperament chance to be slow and stolid. By an act of mental transmigration we share the dire conditions of another, and the process may be momentary or persistent. This act of thinking ourselves into another's place may be so vivid that his trouble will continue to haunt us for years. Who will venture to deny that there is the dawn of a great virtue in every generous impulse which compels us to put ourselves at the standpoint of a sufferer? Sympathy when divorced from wise, practical action may cease to be a virtue. It may pass into hypocrisy, and be cherished because of the sense of spurious self-approval to which it ministers. But all the same we are bound to recognize that it is the source of altruism, and that the sincere emotion is one of the great healing forces at work in a woe-begone world.

¶ What we call the vicarious sacrifice of Christ is nothing strange as regards the principle of it, no superlative, unexampled,

[1] G. Thomas, *The Wayside Altar*, 32.

and therefore unintelligible grace. It only does and suffers, and comes into substitution for, just what any and all love will according to its degree. And in this view, it is not something higher in principle than our human virtue knows and which we ourselves are never to copy or receive, but it is to be understood by what we know already, and is to be more fully understood by what we are to know hereafter, when we are complete in Christ. Nothing is wanting to resolve the vicarious sacrifice of Jesus but the commonly known, always familiar principle of love, accepted as the fundamental law of duty, even by mankind. Given the universality of love, the universality of vicarious sacrifice is given also. Here is the centre and deepest spot of good, or goodness, conceivable. At this point we look into heaven's eye itself, and read the meaning of all heavenly grace.[1]

¶ There is an authentic and beautiful little story told graphically by Dr. Hanna—the biographer and the son-in-law of Dr. Chalmers. "In a household which enjoyed all the benefits of high culture and Christian care one of the children committed a grievous and unexpected fault—he told a falsehood to cover a petty theft. Rebuke and punishment were administered, carried further than they had ever been before, but without effect. The offender was not awakened to any real or deep sorrow for his offence. The boy's insensibility quite overcame his father. Sitting in the same room with his sullen and obstinate child, he bent his head upon his hand and burst into a flood of tears. For a moment or two the boy looked on in wonder; he then crept gradually nearer and nearer to his sobbing parent, and at last got up on his father's knees, asking in a low whisper why it was that he was weeping so. He was told the reason. It wrought like a spell upon his young heart; the sight of his father suffering so bitterly on his account was more than he could bear. He flung his little arms round his father and wept along with him. That father never needed to correct his child again for any like offence."

5. Here, however, it is necessary to meet two common misapprehensions. On the one hand, it is often maintained that for any sin, however great, the word of forgiveness and reconciliation is enough—a man needs no more; while on the other hand it is averred that the deed once done can never be undone, that the sinner must bear the consequences of his sin, and, what is more terrible, remain for ever associated with the memory of it. As F. W. H. Myers in "Saint Paul" says:

[1] Horace Bushnell, *The Vicarious Sacrifice*, 48.

Yes, Thou forgivest, but, with all forgiving,
Canst not renew mine innocence again:
Make Thou, O Christ, a dying of my living,
Purge from the sin but never from the pain.

(1) Why can there not be forgiveness without sacrifice? The answer is this: Because of that moral necessity in the Nature of God which calls for the condemnation of sin. It cannot be necessary to defend with argument the position of such a moral necessity in the Nature of God as calls for the condemnation of sin. To some extent we are conscious of that moral necessity in ourselves, not only in moments of disgust and loathing following an evil indulgence, but also, and far more surely, in moments of spiritual strength and vision, when, lifted near to God, we have discerned, as from His side, the goodness of good and the sinfulness of sin. To some extent we are conscious of that moral necessity as confessed in the life of the community and of the nation in its undying struggle after public righteousness, its eternal condemnation of public sin. But when we lift our thought to God the Righteous, the existence of a moral necessity in His Nature calling for the condemnation of sin becomes an axiom, a self-evident proposition transcending demonstration. Apart from it, God the Righteous is unthinkable. For there are but four attitudes possible in any being toward sin—ignorance, indifference, consent, condemnation. God the Righteous cannot be ignorant; God the Righteous cannot be indifferent; God the Righteous cannot consent; God the Righteous *must* condemn, must, under the moral necessity of His Being. But how is condemnation to be expressed? In two ways only is it expressible to man on the part of God—through precept and through penalty. When the first fails, there remains only the second. God condemned sin by precept to the unfallen world: "Thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die." The wrath of God was revealed from heaven against all sin, all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men. The judgment of God was known, that they which commit such things are worthy of death. The condemnation of sin through precept was universally published; it was written in the natural conscience, it was spoken in the Law. God was true to the moral necessity of His

Nature in openly condemning sin and warning against it. In vain; the freedom of man challenged the precept of God. "By one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned." The condemnation of sin by penalty became, therefore, in the failure of precept, a moral necessity in the nature of God the Righteous. He could not do otherwise. There is nothing of passion, nothing of revenge, nothing of hatred, nothing of sanguinary desire in God's punishment of sin. The punishment of sin is the condemnation of sin by penalty, its condemnation by precept having failed. Therefore to suggest forgiveness without sacrifice is to suggest a knowledge of sin on God's part unaccompanied by His condemnation of it.

¶ The fact of what is meant by original sin is as mysterious and inexplicable as the origin of evil, but it is obviously as much a fact. There is a fault and vice in the race which, given time, as surely develops into actual sin as our physical constitution, given at birth, does into sickness and physical death. It is of this inherited tendency to sin in our nature, looked upon in the abstract and without reference to concrete cases, that I suppose the ninth Article speaks. How can we suppose that such a nature looks in God's eyes, according to the standard of perfect righteousness which we also suppose to be God's standard and law? Does it satisfy that standard? Can He look with neutrality on its divergence from His perfect standard? What is His moral judgment of it as a subject for moral judgment? What He may do to cure it, to pardon it, to make allowances for it, in known or unknown ways, is another matter, about which His known attributes of mercy alone may reassure us; but the question is, How does He look upon this fact of our nature in itself, that without exception it has this strong efficacious germ of evil within it, of which He sees all the possibilities and all the consequences? Can He look on it, even in germ, with complacency or indifference? Must He not judge it and condemn it as in itself, because evil, deserving condemnation? I cannot see what other answer can be given but one, and this is what the Article says.[1]

(2) But there is the feeling already hinted at, namely, that every sinner feels himself to be permanently associated with his own evil deeds. Suppose that a man has committed a great sin, such, for instance, as the betrayal of a trust. If that sin becomes

[1] *Life and Letters of Dean Church*, 248.

known to society the sinner will be punished, not only by the censures of his fellows but by their remembrance of his action. He will always be pointed at as the man who did such and such things in such and such a year. No matter how much he tries, he will never wholly live it down, if he has really been guilty of the offence. But suppose that the world does not know of the misdeed. Will his experience be very different? If he is a man of low sordid nature he will probably suffer no pangs of remorse, but if he is a man of high temper, with capacity for nobler things, he will discover that, as Milton says,

> The mind is its own place, and in itself
> Can make a Heaven of Hell, a Hell of Heaven.

It is noteworthy that the sense of guilt, as we have now stated it, is the product of the influence of Jesus Christ in the world. Nothing precisely like it is to be found apart from that influence. As Professor Van Dyke says, "It was Jesus of Nazareth who illuminated the moral evil in the world most deeply and clearly. He showed its spring, its secret workings, and the power which lies behind it." Thus, to state the point briefly, Jesus, who showed to mankind the foulness of sin, must also be the Person who can deal with guilt, otherwise it were better that He had never come at all. As a matter of fact, this is just what Christians have always believed their Master was able to do. The Christian doctrine of Atonement is the only remedy that has ever been propounded to the world to deal with the psychological fact of guilt. It satisfies a Christ-awakened need. It has been verified by experience during nineteen hundred years. The belief that Christ by His sufferings has wrought out our redemption has been the secret that has lifted thousands of our fellow-men out of the slough of sin and made a holy life possible. Men are not saved by fancies. There must therefore be somewhere in the doctrine a truth that has shown itself able to free men from the thraldom of sin and the worst of its consequences.

¶ In Ellen Thorneycroft Fowler's interesting book, *Concerning Isabel Carnaby*, there occurs a conversation between a godly father and a noble son. I may here venture to give an extract from the same.

"The teaching of modern philosophy is that what is done is done, and what we have written we have written; and that there

is no atonement for the deed once accomplished, and no washing out of the handwriting against us. But I have not so learnt of Christ."

"Then do you believe that what is done can ever be undone?" asked Paul. "Surely that is impossible."

"I do not wish to prophesy smooth things," replied his father, "nor to sprinkle the way of life with rose-water. I know that if a man breaks the law of Nature he will be punished to the uttermost, for there is no forgiveness in Nature. I know that if a man breaks the laws of society he will find neither remission nor mercy, for there is no forgiveness in society; but I believe that if a man breaks the law of God his transgression can be taken away as though it had never been, for 'there is forgiveness with thee that thou mayest be feared.'"

"It is a grand gospel that you preach, father, and seems almost too good to be true."

"Nothing is too good to be true; the truth is the best of everything."[1]

## II.

### The Sinner Become Righteousness.

Having identified Christ with sin, the Apostle goes on in a somewhat similar way to identify believing souls with righteousness. "That we might become the righteousness of God in him." The usual interpretation of these words applies them to the acceptance of the believing soul—his forgiveness, his justification. That of course is included, but it is also transcended. Just as on the one hand it takes a whole Christ, and not merely a portion of His history, to fill out the great meaning of the words "He was made to be sin," so it requires a whole Christian experience, and not merely the initial stages of it, to fill out the full meaning of these words, "that we might become righteousness in him." As on the one hand you cannot find such a commentary upon sin as you find in the experience of Christ, so on the other hand you cannot find such an illustration of righteousness as in the souls in whom the work of Christ bears its fruits, beginning and growing and going on to perfection. Just as Christ was treated in this world as if He were sin, so His people are treated here and hereafter as if they were righteousness.

[1] R. J. Campbell, *A Faith for To-day*, 277.

1. As Christ has identified Himself with us in our sinfulness, so we are identified with Him in His righteousness. Not, again, by any legal fiction; but as, by the purity and love and sorrow of a true mother, a wandering son may be rescued, broken down in penitence and led to trust in God and in his mother, when he cannot trust himself, so the cross of Jesus has ever been the supreme agency whereby God comes close to men, breaks down their pride, heals their self-distrust, and assures them that the love and self-sacrifice and obedience of Christ are all for them.

¶ One day, as I was passing in the field, and that too with some dashes on my conscience, fearing lest yet all was not right, suddenly this sentence fell upon my soul, "Thy righteousness is in heaven"; and methought withal, I saw with the eyes of my soul Jesus Christ at God's right hand. There, I say, was my righteousness; so that wherever I was, or whatever I was doing, God could not say of me, "He wants my righteousness," for that was just before Him. I also saw, moreover, that it was not my good frame of heart that made my righteousness better, nor my bad frame that made my righteousness worse: for my righteousness was Jesus Christ Himself, "the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever." Now did my chains fall off my legs indeed. I was loosed from my afflictions and irons, my temptations also fled away; so that from that time those dreadful Scriptures of God left off to trouble me.[1]

2. In whatever way our Lord was made sin, we are made righteousness. As sin was placed on Him, and He was reckoned with as though it were His own, so His righteousness is reckoned to us, who are in Him by faith, as though it were indeed ours. Christ's identification with us in our sin filled Him with untold anguish; so let our identification with Him in His glorious righteousness fill us with unspeakable joy. And if it is indeed ours, let us dismiss our fears; let us dare to stand in the very light of God's holiness, accepted in the Beloved; let us greatly rejoice in the Lord, and our souls be joyful in the Lord, since He has covered us with the robe of righteousness, as a bridegroom decketh himself with ornaments, and a bride adorneth herself with jewels.

¶ An error of mysterious and alarming sound was charged upon Dr. Crisp—namely, the permutation of persons, or commutation of persons. If the perplexed reader inquires with wonder

[1] Bunyan, *Grace Abounding.*

what this heresy can be, a historian tells him, it is "actually to make a Saviour of the sinner, and a sinner of the Saviour." I have read Dr. Crisp's sermons and there is no declaration in them which is as strong as the following by Luther: "Faith without adulteration must be taught, because by it thou mayest be so cemented with Christ that out of thee and Him there may be made one person that cannot be separated, but eternally coheres; that with confidence thou mayest be able to say, I am Christ—that is, Christ's righteousness is mine, His victory is mine, His existence is mine, etc. And, conversely, Christ may say, I am that sinner—that is, his sins are Mine, his death is Mine, etc., because he adheres to Me, and I to him. We have been joined by faith into one flesh and bone (Eph. v. 30), we are members of Christ's body, of His flesh and of His bones. This faith unites me to Christ more closely than a husband is joined to his wife. So this faith is not a trifling quality, but its magnitude is such that it obscures and entirely sweeps away those most senseless dreams of sophistical charity, concerning merits, concerning worth or qualities of our own, etc." Crisp's alleged heresy is thus the Apostle's doctrine that "Christ was made sin," and that believers are "the righteousness of God"—the old scriptural doctrine taught by the Reformers, by "judicious Hooker," and others.[1]

3. The identification is always in Christ. "In him," says the Apostle. These striking and original words show that St. Paul means much more than the imputation of human sin to Christ, and the imputation of Divine righteousness to men; the sin is not merely regarded as laid on Him, nor the righteousness as conferred on us, but there is in both cases an inner identification, as it were —of Him with sin, and of us with righteousness. This, then, is the heart of the gospel, according to St. Paul: this explains the reconciliation on which throughout the paragraph he has so frequently and earnestly insisted. We are acquitted, justified, in Christ; but, in order to this, He had to be made sin. We could never have been identified with Him and His righteousness, had He not first been identified with us and our sin. We climb the heights because He descended to the depths.

We can conceive a vast society of men wholly obedient to the will of God, living in reverent adoration, working with lowly love; we can conceive this society composed of those who have made a sorrowful trial of what life out of harmony with God is,

[1] D. C. A. Agnew, *The Theology of Consolation*, 234.

and who, having sinned, have been redeemed; in such a society all that is good and beautiful in our present human life is secured and made permanent, all that is base and vile is excluded; death has lost its meaning, because it is understood that these beings are immortal, and if they pass from world to world, gently translated they may fade out of sight, but, no longer identified with a material and earthly organism, they are no longer subjected to the law of decay. Thrilled through and through with the unimpeded life of God, moving in the faultless harmony of that one holy and loving will, they range through the endless spheres and systems of existence, ever learning, ever wondering, ever worshipping, blessed infinitely as in brief and vanishing moments of the present life some of us have been blessed. The yearning which this order of things can create but never satisfy is progressively satisfied. The dreams of the good are realized—

The high that proved too high, the heroic for earth too hard,
The passion that left the ground to lose itself in the sky.

Now this dream of a sinless humanity, made out of this sinful humanity redeemed, this dream which haunts the imagination of Plato, Sir Thomas More, and the Utopian prophets of all ages, this dream which, materialized, inspires all Socialist reformers, this dream which evolutionists retain in the cold and comfortless form of a distant and vastly improved humanity in which we have no part except that of dying for it, this dream is the sober expectation of the Apostles. They are convinced that it will be; they are also convinced that they hold in their hands the truth and the power which will ultimately, however slowly, realize it.

¶ How far off the final triumph of Christ may be when sin shall be destroyed for ever and death itself shall die, it is not ours to know. Long has been the strife, intense the agony, and the whole creation is groaning and travailing in pain together until now; and so will continue till Christ be formed in every human soul, and in Him all are made alive. Then will the prayer of ages be answered and God's will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Towards this sublime consummation, the unchallenged reign of God the Father, and the uninterrupted harmony of the human race with its Creator, all things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, unceasingly conspire. We have seen how far from primeval fire vapour and stellar dust, through immeasur-

able geologic eras this process swept forward till the earth became prepared for that august, mysterious guest called Life, and on through that endless kaleidoscopic succession of ever rising organisms till God-like man appeared, and still on through man's chequered career till Christ Himself became incarnate to remake Mankind, to save that which was lost, and to turn this sin-blighted earth into Heaven. For this He is now energizing in the souls of men, and we cannot doubt that the ultimate survival of the Christ-type is assured. By Divine right of the fittest it must prevail. Thus, at long last, shall the Divine heart be satisfied, and a saved and wondering universe behold—no longer in a mirror darkly, but face to face—the Unveiled Glory.[1]

With this ambiguous earth
His dealings have been told us. These abide:
The signal to a maid, the human birth,
The lesson, and the young Man crucified.

But not a star of all
The innumerable host of stars has heard
How He administered this terrestrial ball.
Our race have kept their Lord's entrusted Word.

Of His earth-visiting feet
None knows the secret, cherished, perilous,
The terrible, shamefast, frightened, whispered, sweet,
Heart-shattering secret of His way with us.

No planet knows that this
Our wayside planet, carrying land and wave,
Love and life multiplied, and pain and bliss,
Bears, as chief treasure, one forsaken grave.

Nor, in our little day,
May His devices with the heavens be guessed,
His pilgrimage to thread the Milky Way
Or His bestowals there be manifest.

But in the eternities,
Doubtless we shall compare together, hear
A million alien Gospels, in what guise
He trod the Pleiades, the Lyre, the Bear.

[1] L. W. Caws, *The Unveiled Glory*, 205.

O, be prepared, my soul!
To read the inconceivable, to scan
The million forms of God those stars unroll
When, in our turn, we show to them a Man.[1]

4. Now out of all this two great lights flash forth—one upon *God*, and one upon *ourselves*.

(1) Here is a great light upon *God*. For it is God who does it all: He hath made Him to be sin. There used to be a way of stating the sacrifice of Christ as if it were something flung at the feet of an angry God to persuade Him to change His mind. But God did not need to change His mind. The ministry of reconciliation began in His own heart before ever it expressed itself in the perfect Life or the wondrous Death. It was necessary that the world should be redeemed by sacrifice; but the sacrifice that redeemed us was the sacrifice of God, and the price that bought us was the gift of God. "He hath made him to be sin"; and when we see Christ identifying Himself with our sinful race, even to the uttermost of all that was involved in that, we know that the heart of God is thus entangled in our sorrow, and the hands of God are stretched out to save us from our sin. That is why this message is so melting, so subduing, so morally magnificent. It was of the message of this verse that Goethe said, "There is nothing diviner than this." And there is indeed nothing diviner than this—that God Himself should stoop to share the lot of His creatures, even to the deepest that was involved in their sin, and should raise them to His own glory and immortality. This is a God we can worship. His nature and His name is Love.

¶ When you speak to me of the love of God, I always feel sure that you mean a love which includes and implies righteousness, and I had hoped that you would interpret me in the same way. In fact I would say that, in contrasting the fatherhood of God with His judgeship, I meant the first to represent a righteousness which seeks to communicate itself, and the second a righteousness which seeks to vindicate itself, and I intended to say that the second was put in action in subserviency to the first.[2]

[1] Alice Meynell, *Poems*, 114.
[2] *Letters of Thomas Erskine of Linlathen*, ii. 183.

For me,
I have my own church equally:
And in this church my faith sprang first! . . .
In youth I looked to these very skies,
And probing their immensities,
I found God there, His visible power;
Yet felt in my heart, amid all its sense
Of the power, an equal evidence
That His love, there too, was the nobler dower.
For the loving worm within its clod
Were diviner than a loveless god
Amid His worlds, I will dare to say . . .
Love which, on earth, amid all the shows of it,
Has ever been seen the sole good of life in it,
The love, ever growing there, spite of the strife in it;
Shall arise, made perfect, from death's repose of it.
And I shall behold Thee, face to face,
O God, and in Thy light retrace
How in all I loved here, still wast Thou!
Whom pressing to, then, as I fain would now,
I shall find as able to satiate
The love, Thy gift, as my spirit's wonder
Thou art able to quicken and sublimate,
With this sky of Thine, that I now walk under,
And glory in Thee for, as I gaze
Thus, thus! Oh, let men keep their ways
Of seeking Thee in a narrow shrine—
Be this my way! And this is mine![1]

(2) Here also is a light upon *ourselves* and our own possibilities. We want to make something of ourselves—What shall it be? Shall we allow God to make us—righteousness? To make us the righteousness of God? To give us this Divine standing and hope and victory? We must bestir our hearts to receive the message, to take the gift, to live the life; since, because Christ has lived and died, all things are possible. "That we might be made . . ." What hope, what promise, what victory lies there!

¶ I have somewhere read of an American statesman who sinned a certain sin. On his death-bed he asked for a dictionary; he wanted, he said, to look up the word "Remorse." The physician told him there was no dictionary in the room. "Take a card then," said he, "and write on it the word that best symbolizes

[1] Browning, *Christmas Eve.*

my soul. Write it in large letters. Underscore it—the word Remorse." It was done as he desired, and after he had gazed upon it for a time, he handed the card again to the doctor. "What shall I do with it?" said the puzzled physician. "Put it in your pocket," was the reply; "and when I am gone, take it out and look at it, and say, 'That is the soul of John Randolph.'" That is what some men have made of themselves—remorse, living remorse, incarnate remorse. But God desires that we should be made something better than that: He desires that we should be made righteousness. It is possible.

Just and holy is Thy name,
I am all unrighteousness;
False and full of sin I am,
Thou art full of truth and grace.[1]

[1] J. M. E. Ross.

Sorrow.

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## Sorrow.

**For godly sorrow worketh repentance unto salvation, a repentance which bringeth no regret: but the sorrow of the world worketh death.—2 Cor. vii. 10.**

St. Paul expresses his satisfaction that the Corinthians had exhibited a genuine sorrow for a fault of which they had been guilty, and for which he had reproved them; a sorrow that had respect to God and not to man; a sorrow that resulted in real repentance, as exhibited in their confession of it before God, and in their subsequent anxious endeavours to remove the evil from among them. "Now I rejoice, not that ye were made sorry, but that ye were made sorry unto repentance: for ye were made sorry after a godly sort, that ye might suffer loss by us in nothing. For godly sorrow worketh repentance unto salvation, a repentance which bringeth no regret: but the sorrow of the world worketh death. For behold, this selfsame thing, that ye were made sorry after a godly sort, what earnest care it wrought in you, yea, what clearing of yourselves, yea, what indignation, yea, what fear, yea, what longing, yea, what zeal, yea, what avenging. In everything ye approved yourselves to be pure in the matter."

There are two kinds of sorrow, then. There is godly sorrow and there is the sorrow of the world. Look first at the latter.

### I.

### The Sorrow of the World.

1. There are various kinds of sorrow *in* the world, some of which work death, such as the bitter vexation, the utter despondency, the fierce disappointment which are occasioned by the loss of some prized object, or by being thwarted in some cherished scheme. These sometimes wear out the life or lead to self-

destruction. It is not, however, any sorrow of this kind that St. Paul intends here by "sorrow *of* the world," but, as the context shows, a sorrow that has some relation to sin. The world has its sorrow on account of sin, after its own way, and from its own standpoint; and it must be some sorrow of this kind that is here alluded to, else the point of the contrast between it and godly sorrow would be lost. For instance, there is the sorrow occasioned by the shame, exposure, infamy, loss, a man may have brought upon himself by some transgression. Of this kind was the sorrow of Saul when he said to Samuel, who had just predicted the loss of his kingdom for his disobedience, "I have sinned, yet honour me now before the elders of the people." This sorrow becomes sometimes a fierce exasperation under the pressure of the consequences of sin. Such was the sorrow of Cain when, in the passion of his resentment at God's sentence upon him, he cried, "My sin is greater than I can bear." Or it passes into a gloomy, desponding hopeless remorse, into the very abandonment of despair. Such was the sorrow of Judas.

For sorrow is, in itself, a thing neither good nor bad; its value depends upon the spirit of the person on whom it falls. Fire will inflame straw, soften iron, or harden clay; its effects are determined by the object with which it comes in contact. Warmth develops the energies of life, or helps the progress of decay. It is a great power in the hot-house, a great power also in the coffin; it expands the leaf, matures the fruit, adds precocious vigour to vegetable life: and warmth, too, develops with tenfold rapidity the weltering process of dissolution. So too with sorrow. There are spirits in which it develops the seminal principle of life; there are others in which it prematurely hastens the consummation of irreparable decay.

¶ When Dante descends to the Fifth Circle of the Inferno he finds there a black and loathsome marsh, made by the swarthy waters of the Stygian stream pouring down into it, dreary and turbid, through the cleft which they have worn out for themselves. And there, in the putrid fen, he sees the souls of those whom anger has ruined; and they are smiting and tearing and maiming one another in ceaseless, senseless rage. But there are others there, his master tells him, whom he cannot see, whose sobs make those bubbles that he may mark ever rising to the surface of the pool—others, plunged further into the filthy swamp.

And what is the sin that has thrust them down into that uttermost wretchedness? "Fixed in the slime, they say, 'Gloomy were we in the sweet air, that is gladdened by the sun, carrying sullen, lazy, smoke within our hearts; now lie we gloomy here in the black mire.' This hymn they gurgle in their throats, for they cannot speak it in full words." Surely it is a tremendous and relentless picture of unbroken sullenness—of wilful gloom that has for ever shut out light and love; of that death which the sorrow of the world worketh.[1]

2. The sorrow of the world is not a sorrow for sin as such, but rather for its consequences, whether immediate or ultimate. Loss of reputation or of health may have ensued; this occasions regret, but no real shame or grief for the cause of it is felt. Or the hand of death may be laid on the man, and then the spirit shivers and shudders at the dread hereafter, yet with no compunction or brokenness of heart for the sin. This kind of sorrow is followed by no real or permanent reformation. Mere dread of consequences, however acute or strong, while it may repress the outbreak of evil to some extent, touches not in the smallest degree the root of the thing, because it neither eradicates nor counteracts the love of sin. That remains in all its potency. Hence he who woke in the morning to all the miserable suffering of the previous night's excess repeats that excess as soon as the reaction has passed away. And worse still, he who cried to God to have mercy on him and vowed amendment, thinking himself dying, has on his recovery gone back to all his vileness. Why? Because his sorrow was no contrition for sin, nor was the love of sin mortified in his heart.

¶ Without energy, repentance is disease. He who can find nothing to do but weep for his sins will end by weeping because he has nothing to eat. Like Mackellar, Stevenson "knows nothing less respectable than the tears of drunkenness, and turns his back impatiently on this poor sight." He is not afraid of the application of his principles to individual cases, and says plainly of Robert Burns: "He was still not perhaps devoted to religion, but haunted by it: and at a touch of sickness prostrated himself before God in what I can only call unmanly penitence."[2]

¶ A man who had stolen the pyx, and got frightened when justice was at his heels, might feel the sort of penitence which

[1] F. Paget, *The Spirit of Discipline*, 51.

[2] John Kelman, *The Faith of Robert Louis Stevenson*, 236.

would induce him to run back in the dark and lay the pyx where the sexton might find it; but if in doing so he whispered to the Blessed Virgin that he was moved by considering the sacredness of all property, and the peculiar sacredness of the pyx, it is not to be believed that she would like him the better for it. Indeed, one often seems to see why the saints should prefer candles to words, especially from penitents whose skin is in danger.[1]

¶ The Spartan lad was taught that there was no wrong in anything he did, but that the wrong was in being found out. Consequently, when one lad had stolen a white pet fox, and hid it under his tunic, he allowed the fox to gnaw into his very breast, and yet made no sign. The theft of the fox was nothing, but being found out was everything! Regret for the consequences of sin, or the exposure of sin, or the penalties of sin, is no real element of a godly repentance.[2]

## II.

### Godly Sorrow.

"Godly sorrow" is, literally rendered, "sorrow according to God," which may mean either sorrow which has reference to God, or sorrow which is in accordance with His will—that is to say, which is pleasing to Him; for if it is the former, it will be the latter. God sees sin not in its consequences, but in itself—a thing infinitely evil, even if the consequences were happiness to the guilty instead of misery. So sorrow according to God is to see sin as God sees it. The grief of Peter was as bitter as that of Judas. He went out and wept bitterly; how bitterly none can tell but they who have learned to look on sin as God does. But in Peter's grief there was an element of hope; and that sprang precisely from this—that he saw God in it all. Despair of self did not lead to despair of God.

We are all of us quite ready to say, "I have done wrong many a time"; but there are some of us who hesitate to take the other step, and say, "I have done sin." Sin has for its correlative God. If there is no God there is no sin. There may be faults, there may be failures, there may be transgressions, breaches of the moral law, things done inconsistent with man's nature and constitution,

[1] George Eliot, *Felix Holt.* [2] A. T. Pierson, *Foundation Truths*, 10.

and so on; but if there be a God, then we have personal relations to that Person and His law; and when we break His law it is more than crime; it is more than fault; it is more than transgression; it is more than wrong; it is sin. It is when we lift the shutter off conscience, and let the light of God rush in upon our hearts and consciences, that we have the wholesome sorrow that worketh repentance and salvation and life.

¶ I had offered to let my Dearest be free of me, and of any virtual engagement she might think there was; but she would not hear of it, not of that, the Noble Soul; but stood resolved to share my dark lot along with me, be [it] what it might. Alas, her love was never known completely to me, and how celestial it was, till I had lost her! "Oh for one five-minutes more of her," I have often said, since April last, "to tell her with what perfect love, and admiration as of the beautifullest of known human souls, I did intrinsically always regard her!" But all minutes of the time are irrevocably past:—be wise, all ye living, and remember that time *passes* and does not return![1]

¶ In the first week in May (about a fortnight after his wife's tragically sudden death) Carlyle, who had hitherto desired to be left alone, sent me a message that he would like to see me. He came down to me into the library in his dressing-gown, haggard and as if turned to stone. He had scarcely slept, he said, since the funeral. He could not "cry." He was stunned and stupefied. He had never realized the possibility of losing her. He had settled that he would die first, and now she was gone. From this time and onwards, as long as he was in town, I saw him almost daily. He was looking through her papers, her notebooks and journals, and old scenes came mercilessly back to him in vistas of mournful memory. In his long sleepless nights, he recognized too late what she had felt and suffered under his childish irritabilities. His faults rose up in remorseless judgment, and as he had thought too little of them before, so now he exaggerated them to himself in his helpless repentance. For such faults an atonement was due, and to her no atonement could now be made. He remembered, however, Johnson's penance at Uttoxeter; not once, but many times, he told me that something like that was required from him, if he could see his way to it. "Oh!" he cried, again and again, "if I could but see her once more, were it but for five minutes, to let her know that I always loved her through all

[1] Carlyle, *Reminiscences*, ii. 168.

that. She never did know it, never." If he could but see her again! His heart seemed breaking as he said it.[1]

1. This sorrow is awakened by considerations that have respect to God as good and gracious. Its burden is not, "I have incurred the wrath of an angry God," but, "I have displeased and grieved my Father, my Saviour." Hence it is a sorrow for sin as such. It is not the thought of the penalty that oppresses, but of the fault itself, as a thing against God. It is not the father's frown, but the father's grieved look, that melts and subdues the offending child. Hence this sorrow is a real contrition, a brokenness of heart. Hence it is a self abhorring and a shame; its thought is, "Oh how could I have so displeased my God and Father, how sinful have I been, how weak and wayward is my heart!" Hence the longing and the cry of this sorrow is to be delivered from the power and pollution of sin. While it sues for pardon it supplicates for cleansing. Therefore it is a reclaiming sorrow, it brings back the soul to God and holiness.

Law and the fear of hell may startle into sorrow, and even lead to some kind of repentance. But it is the great power of Christ's love and sacrifice that will really melt the heart into true repentance. You may hammer ice to pieces, but it is ice still. You may bray a fool in a mortar, and his folly will not depart from him. Dread of punishment may pulverize the heart, but not change it; and each fragment, like the smallest bit of a magnet, will have the same characteristics as the whole mass. But "the goodness of God leads to repentance," as the prodigal is conquered and sees the true hideousness of the swine's trough when he bethinks himself of the father's love.

¶ My husband's eldest sister writes:—"Father was apt to be very strict, and would punish disobedience or other wrongdoing very heavily. But the rod never brought my brother Tom to repentance; he would stand any flogging without giving in, and father had to try another way. He had only to say, 'Tom, I see grey hairs on your mother's head, and they are caused by your bad conduct,' to bring the lad to sorrowful tears."[2]

¶ Fix in your minds—or rather ask God to fix in your minds—this one idea of an absolutely good God; good with all forms

[1] J. A. Froude, *Thomas Carlyle: Life in London*, ii. 322.

[2] E. M. Champness, *The Life-Story of Thomas Champness*, 19.

of goodness which you respect and love in man; good as you, and I, and every honest man, understand the plain word good. Slowly you will acquire that grand and all-illuminating idea; slowly and most imperfectly at best: for who is mortal man that he should conceive and comprehend the goodness of the infinitely good God! But see, then, whether, in the light of that one idea, all the old-fashioned Christian ideas about the relation of God to man; whether Providence, Prayer, Inspiration, Revelation, the Incarnation, the Passion, and the final triumph of the Son of God —whether all these, I say, do not seem to you, not merely beautiful, not merely probable, but rational, and logical, and necessary, moral consequences from the one idea of an Absolute and Eternal Goodness, the living Parent of the Universe.[1]

2. "Godly sorrow worketh repentance." What is repentance? A ready answer is, Repentance is sorrow for sin; but clearly this text draws a distinction between the two. There are very few of the great key-words of Christianity which have suffered more violent and unkind treatment, and have been more obscured by misunderstandings, than this great word. It has been weakened down into penitence, which, in the ordinary acceptation, means simply a regretful sense of our own evil. And it has been still further docked and degraded, both in its syllables and in its substance, into penance. But the "repentance" of the New Testament and of the Old Testament—one of the twin conditions of salvation—is neither sorrow for sin nor works of restitution and satisfaction, but it is, as the word distinctly expresses, a change of purpose in regard to the sin for which a man mourns.

Repentance is a principle of life, a new posture of mind, a new attitude toward God, a new attitude toward sin, a new attitude toward salvation. Feeling is not to be mistaken for repentance. There may be feeling that does not lead to repentance, and there may be repentance that is preceded by very little feeling. If you want to go from one room to another, it is important you should leave one room behind you and enter into the other, but it matters not how you get from one to the other, so long as you get there. And the great thing is this: if you have been living in sin, you want to get out of sin into God; and by what means or with what feeling you get out is of comparatively little consequence, so long as you get out. Repentance is the leaving

[1] *Charles Kingsley: Letters and Memories*, ii. 310.

of one thing behind you, and faith is the entering into something else before you. It is a change of mind or purpose, a complete turning about with reference to God and sin.

¶ In *Adam Bede*, George Eliot represents the heroine Dinah Morris as thus pointing out to the unhappy Hetty Sorrel the conditions of true repentance: "God can't bless you while you have one falsehood in your soul; His pardoning mercy can't reach you until you open your heart to Him, and say, 'I have done this great wickedness; O God, save me, make me pure from sin.' While you cling to one sin and will not part with it, it must drag you down to misery after death, as it has dragged you to misery here in this world, my poor, poor Hetty. It is sin that brings dread, and darkness, and despair: there is light and blessedness for us as soon as we cast it off: God enters our souls then, and teaches us, and brings us strength and peace."

¶ Remorse which positively excludes the love of God is infernal, it is like that of the lost. Repentance which does not regret the love of God, even though as yet it is without it, is good and desirable, but imperfect: it can never save us until it attains to love, and is mingled with it. So that, as the great Apostle said, even if he gave his body to be burned, and all his goods to the poor, and had not charity, it would all be of no avail; we, too, may say with truth that, however great our penitence may be, even though it make our eyes overflow with tears of sorrow, and our hearts to break with remorse, still if we have not the holy love of God it will serve us nothing as regards eternal life.[1]

3. This repentance is "not to be repented of"; it contains no sting of regret. Bitter indeed may be the tears that flow when first the discovery is made by the heart of its own vileness; overwhelming, perhaps, may be the shame and grief; like rankling arrows may be those convictions of sin in the contrite heart; yet, in looking back, not one pang is regretted, for they were the birth throes of the soul's conversion. Though we sow in tears, yet, if we reap in joy, those tears will never be regretted. Even in the very process of this sorrow, apart from its ultimate result, there is that which causes it not to be regretted. That sorrow softens the heart and relieves it. We know that there is such a thing as a hard stunning grief, when not a tear is shed and the heart seems turned to stone. We know what instant relief it is when aught

[1] St. Francis De Sales, *Theotimus*, bk. ii. ch. 19.

so touches that grief-bound spirit as to unseal its fountain, and unlock its rigidity. The passion of sorrow that ensues is positive luxury as compared with its former hard grief. So there is a sweet unburdening of the soul in the sorrow of repentance. We all remember how as children the heart became lightened, when, after some fault committed, and perhaps long-concealed or unowned, we at last told it all out to a loving parent's ear, though scarce for sobbing could we tell it. Even so, when the contrite sinner falls upon his Saviour's breast, in wailing but yet in confiding acknowledgment of his sin, does he experience the blessedness of that sorrow which is unto repentance, in its unburdening, softening, melting power.

¶ Sin, repentance, and pardon are like to the three vernal months of the year, March, April, and May. Sin comes in like March, blustering, stormy, and full of bold violence. Repentance succeeds like April, showering, weeping, and full of tears. Pardon follows like May, springing, singing, full of joys and flowers. Our eyes must be full of April, with the sorrow of repentance; and then our hearts shall be full of May, with the true joy of forgiveness.[1]

¶ It is as when of old God would have the earth at its fairest for the coming of him who was to have dominion over it all: and "there went up a mist and watered the earth"—hung it all in tears. The leaves were heavy and dripping, the flowers were sodden, the drenched grass was matted together. Then arose the sun, and out of tears came radiant beauty, for the ruddy light shot through it all and glistened in every drop, and hung the trees with diamonds, and sowed the grass with orient pearl, and flashed on every side with emerald and ruby, and a jewel was lapped in every flower. So is born the joy of the Lord. The Sun of Righteousness arises and shines upon the tears of our penitence and grief. Or yet again: it is as when in some overheated day the black clouds of thunder creep up the sky and blot out the sun; not a breath stirs the languid leaves, nor any sound breaks the awe and hush of all things. Then comes the lightning flash. And then the crashing thunder, "like a whole sea overhead," and the floods that run in rivulets on every side. And afterwards the new life, filling everything with cool, delicious freshness. The sun glistens in the rain-drops and tips the edges of the departing clouds with gold, and flings a rainbow right across the heavens; and on every side bursts forth a ringing gladness, like the prophet's song

[1] Thomas Adams.

of old: "O Lord, I will praise thee: though thou wast angry with me thine anger is turned away, and thou comfortedst me."[1]

Who may tell how often sorrow
Cometh at the close of day;
Sorrow for the sinful record
Borne by passing time away;
Sorrow for good resolutions
Broken in the toil of life;
For the Christian's weapons tarnished,
Blunted in the daily strife;
For the weakly heart's backsliding
In the journey to its bourne;
For the dulness of the spirit
Dwelling in its carnal urn.
Yet this sorrow bringeth comfort,
When it bends the contrite knee
In an act of heartfelt worship,
In a deep humility.
Then it is the blest forerunner
Of a grace that steals always,
With refreshing to the spirit,
Changing sighs to songs of praise.
Sorrow such as this be ever
Welcome to this heart of mine,
Through such tears a hopeful rainbow
O'er my future path doth shine;
Minister of heaven's giving,
Messenger to clear the way,
Till the love of God descending
Teaches all my soul to pray.
And, in answer, such a measure
Of His strength divine comes down,
That my spirit more than ever
Strives to win and wear the crown.
Godly sorrow, oft come hither
On the stilly wings of eve,
Such a holy joy attends thee
That it is a bliss to grieve.[2]

[1] M. G. Pearse, *Parables and Pictures*, 229. [2] R. W. Buckley.

# The Liberality of Christ.

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## The Liberality of Christ.

**For ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, that ye through his poverty might become rich.—2 Cor. viii. 9.**

St. Paul is exhorting the Corinthians to contribute to the relief of the poor Christians at Jerusalem. First, he tells them what the churches of Macedonia had done. In persecution and poverty they had given so largely that St. Paul was reluctant to accept the gift till they prayed him with much entreaty to do so. Then he urges upon the Corinthians that, as they abounded in other endowments, spiritual and moral, they would abound in this grace also. And then he checks himself, and sums the appeal by calling on them to give proof of the sincerity of their love, for he says, "Ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ." No argument could go above or beyond this.

The argument includes these three things—

I. What our Lord was.
II. What He became.
III. What He purposed.

### I.

### What He Was.

**"Though he was rich."**

In what did Christ's wealth consist? In the seventeenth chapter of St. John's Gospel is recorded that last great prayer of the Master. In it He reminds the Father that before the world was created He shared God's glory. This, then, is the first item in the inventory of His wealth. He shared through eternity the glory of the Infinite God. In the same prayer He reminds God that before the earth was created He possessed the Father's love.

The love of the All-Father, from time eternal, was His. This is the second item in the inventory of His wealth. In the Garden of Gethsemane, He rebukes His warlike followers, and tells them that He could pray the Father and He would send Him legions of angels. During His agony in the Garden and after His temptation in the wilderness, angels came and ministered unto Him. From this it is fair to assume that, in the ages before the Incarnation, He had the service, love, and fellowship of all the heavenly hosts. This is the third item in the inventory of His wealth. In the first chapter of John's Gospel we read that "all things were made by him; and without him was not anything made that hath been made." He was the Creator, and therefore, through all time the absolute Owner, of every atom of material wealth in the entire universe of God. This is the fourth item in the inventory of His wealth.

1. The conventional idea of riches is pecuniary abundance, superfluity of goods personal and heritable. The typical rich man is Dives, "clothed in purple and fine linen and faring sumptuously every day." His riches are pre-eminently calculable, can be written down and reckoned up in black and white. Riches of this order the average English mind instinctively understands and appreciates. There is nothing so wonderful to it as property. To own it is to be a great man, and the more he owns the greater a man he is. The millionaire is our permanent social wonder, a man made admirable by his millions. And there is a point where material wealth is a thing of quite infinite significance, the point where it expresses immanent energies, where it is the outcome and product of a nature so rich that it must to fulfil itself burst into wealth. An empty nature feels no oppression in a vacant universe; a rich nature must strenuously labour to create a without that at once reflects and satisfies the within. And St. Paul conceives Christ as of a fulness so infinite that He could not but create, and of His fulness all creation had received. Of Him, and to Him, and through Him, were all things; in all, His thought was manifested, His energies active; He was before all things, and in Him all stood together in divinest system for divinest ends. And to be so rich within and without was indeed to have infinite wealth.

¶ Awe comes into the soul of man as he looks into the clear midnight heaven and watches its innumerable hosts, each a point of light to the eye, yet so speaking to the imagination as to bewilder it by visions of a starlit immensity, of a space mind cannot limit, instinct with thought, throbbing with generative, progressive, mighty life. If you stood on what seems the remotest star in space, trembling like the veriest rushlight on the verge of outer darkness, you would find yourself in the heart of a mightier sun than your own, while all round new constellations would glow like the myriad eyes of God, looking through the very points that made space visible into the minds that made it living; and if there stood beside you a master spirit to teach the bewildered, his response to your cry—"Whose are these?"—would be: "The eternal Reason men call the Christ made and owns the worlds! So rich was His essential nature that He thought into being whatever is. The universe is His wealth, and its weal His joy."[1]

¶ When we wish to show foreign potentates the glory of England, we take them in our ignorant human way to the Southampton waters, and show them ironclad ships of war as they belch out fire and smoke, and make the whole region tremble with their thunder. But when the Psalmist would show us the glorious majesty of God's Kingdom he takes us to the corn-fields. "He openeth his hand, and satisfieth the desire of every living thing." He rules through feeding us: and a well-fed people makes a stable government.[2]

2. The Eternal Son was rich in the wealth that is well-being. He was not doomed to the splendid misery of being alone in His ownership of the worlds, of having nothing but material, calculable wealth. He was rich in the honour God enjoys, in the worship of angel and spirit, in the happiness which is at once the essence and the manifestation of Divine perfection, in the affection given by the Eternal Father to the only begotten Son.

Did you ever think what the mystery we call Trinity means? You speak perhaps of the time when God was alone, when, before the worlds were, He dwelt solitary in His own eternity. But God was never alone, could never be alone. He is by His very nature not solitude but society. Were He solitude, He could not be the absolute perfection which is our only God. God is love, and love is social. You cannot have love without a subject loving and an object loved. The object is as necessary as the subject.

[1] A. M. Fairbairn, *The City of God*, 300. [2] D. W. Simon.

Where there is no person to be loved, love is impossible. God is reason, and reason is social. Knowledge implies subject and object, the person that knows, the person known. Deny the distinction of knowing subject and known object, and the very possibility of knowledge is denied. But if God is essentially love and knowledge, He is essentially social; and if the time never was when these were no realities to Him, the time never was when His nature was without the loved person and the known object. When we speak of the person loved, we name Him "Son"; of the object known, we name Him "Word." And who shall tell the Divine beatitude of the eternity when the Son lay in the bosom of the Father, and the arms of the Father held the person of the Son, and the tides of love flowed and ebbed with a rhythm that beat out as it were the music of the eternal joy? In that wealth of essential being Christ lived with the Father "before the foundation of the world," so "rich" that "in him dwelt all the fulness of the Godhead bodily."

## II.

### What He Became.

**"He became poor."**

In what did this poverty consist? His Divine perfections do not admit of decrease or limitation. The infinite riches of His own nature must be ever infinite. He is the Maker of all things and the Upholder of all things which He has made. He may destroy, but He cannot alienate; for to withdraw His support from any creature would be its annihilation. And if He were to destroy He would not be less rich; for the resources of the Creator are inexhaustible, and at His will He could replace what He had annihilated. God might shed upon us the wealth of an entire creation and yet remain as rich as before He gave it. He might create and give again and again, while His own riches would remain the same and undiminished. To give is nothing with God. And as God He could not become poor.

Whatever this poverty of the Son of God might mean, it could not imply that He ceased to be the Owner and the Lord of all

things! When we come to think of it, the possessions proper to this Person which made Him so rich were quite inalienable possessions. How could the Divine Creator of the universe lose His proprietary right over everything that He had made? That sort of limited ownership which the law gives me over what is mine I can renounce, I can transfer. I can make mine yours. Not so with the absolute ownership of God. All things are His by an indefeasible title. The use of them He may lend: His own proprietorship in them He cannot alienate. Still less is it possible to strip oneself of those moral and personal qualities which make up the wealth of one's very nature. My faculties of mind and heart are too much my own for me to part with them. Could a Divine Person cease to carry in Himself the unsearchable riches of Divine power, or wisdom, or goodness? In whatever way He became poor, it was not by ceasing to be in actual right of possession the rich One.

¶ We must recall to mind the truth that Christ's state of humiliation was at the same time a state invested with moral dignity and glory, as one in which He had, by the favour of His Father, an opportunity of achieving a sublime task, in His high and honourable calling as the Captain of salvation. Christ Himself did not lose sight of this truth; it was ever present to His thoughts, carrying Him through the hardest experiences as the mere incidents of a congenial vocation. Hence, though a man of sorrows, He was even on earth anointed with the oil of gladness above His fellows. Does this seem strange? Why, even Apollo, unjustly banished from heaven, and cherishing a sense of injury done to him by Jove, in his state of exile a neat-herd in the service of Admetus, is represented by the poet as making the vale of Pheræa vocal with the sweet sounds of his lute, and gathering the wild beasts around him by the charms of celestial music. Shall we wonder that there was Divine gladness in the heart of Him who came into this world, not by constraint, but willingly; not with a burning sense of wrong, but with a grateful sense of high privilege; and that He had a blessed consciousness of fellowship with His Father, who sent Him, during the whole of His pilgrimage through this vale of tears?[1]

1. The poverty of our Lord was not an outward condition so much as an inward act. At the most, the outward condition only mirrored the inward act. All things were not less truly His

[1] A. B. Bruce, *The Humiliation of Christ*, 375.

own than before; only He refused to assert His right to them, or to seize upon the benefits of them; His rights of property He could not forfeit; but He forbore to exercise them. And why? That He might make Himself in all things like unto us, His human and fallen brethren. This position of voluntary poverty into which the rich Heir of all things was pleased for a time to put Himself, will be most easily understood if we say simply that He put Himself into our position. To the level of our poverty He chose to reduce Himself. That covers all the elements or ingredients in this strange self-impoverishment of God.

¶ Inspired by the thought of poverty having been Christ's inseparable companion on earth, Bernardine exclaims:—"Jesus, my Saviour, at Thy entry into this life, poverty received Thee in the holy crib and in the manger, and during Thy earthly sojourn deprived Thee of everything, so that Thou hadst not even where to lay Thy head. While fighting the fight of our redemption, that faithful companion was ever at Thy side, and when Thy disciples deserted and denied Thee, she, Thy sworn attendant, never swerved. Nay, then it was that she clasped Thee the more fervently. Then, when even Thy mother, who alone still honoured Thee in the faithfulness of her heart, was unable to draw nigh to Thee, owing to the height of the cross, then did victorious Poverty surround Thee with all her privations, as with a train of followers pleasing to Thy heart, pressing Thee the more tightly and inextricably in her arms. She it was who, far from lightening Thy cross, gave to Thee one hard and rough. She apportioned not the nails to the number of Thy wounds, neither did she soften nor sharpen their point, but she fashioned three of a kind, rough, ragged and blunt, so as to increase Thy sufferings. And when dying parched with thirst, Thy faithful spouse was solicitous to deprive Thee of even a drop of water; nay, she it was who prepared for Thee at the hands of Thy cruel executioners so bitter a drink that, having once tasted it, Thou couldst not partake of it. Thus in the arms of Thy beloved didst Thou breathe forth Thy last. And, faithful to the end, she assisted at Thy burial, permitting Thee only a loan of sepulchre, perfumes, and winding sheet. Nor was she absent at Thy resurrection, for gloriously didst Thou rise again in the arms of Thy holy spouse leaving everything behind Thee, both what Thou hadst borrowed and what had been offered Thee, and taking Thy spouse with Thee to heaven, leaving to worldlings the things of this world."[1]

[1] P. Thureau-Dangin, *St. Bernardine of Siena*, 152.

2. The poverty of our Lord was a genuine renunciation. "I love," says A. C. Benson in *The Altar Fire*, "to think of Wordsworth an obscure, poor, perverse, and absurd man, living on milk and eggs, utterly unaccountable and puerile to the sensible man of affairs; of Charlotte Brontë in the bare kitchen of the little house in the grey wind-swept village on the edge of the moor. We surround such scenes with a heavenly halo. We think of them as romantic, but there was little that was beautiful about them at the time. The most beautiful of such scenes is the tale of Bethlehem. We poor human souls, knowing what that event has meant for the race, make the bare, ugly place seemly and lovely, surrounding the Babe with a tapestry of heavenly forms and holy lights, and rapturous sounds, taking the terror and meanness of the scene away, and thereby losing the Divine seal of the great mystery, the fact that hope can spring in unstained and sublime radiance from the vilest, lowest, meanest conditions that can well be conceived."

Poverty is a very terrible thing; so terrible that nothing seems to deal so hardly with all our fairer and gentler humanities. Where the face is pinched with habitual want, the heart is seldom the home of scrupulous veracity or chivalrous honour. When the struggle for life grows deadliest even the sternest of the virtues begin to fail. There sit two men on a raft afloat on the mighty deep: it is all that remains of a once goodly ship, they all that survive of a once jovial and kindly crew. In the solitude of the ancient ocean, faced by grim starvation, what do they? Clasp each other in a last fraternal embrace, and die together in a love victorious over famine? No, not they; rather they sit and watch each other with hungry eyes, and each thinks what chances he may have in the struggle that is to determine which of the two shall give his life for the other. Nay poverty is not kindly, famine does not come with grace in her hand and magnanimity in her heart; and natures that find it easy to be good with riches find it hard to be good with enforced poverty. And Christ though rich became poor.

(1) *He stooped to creaturely dependence.*—Though inherently and divinely equal to the Father, He consented to occupy the position of a creature's inferiority: "My Father is greater than I." Though Almighty Maker of the Universe, He consented to

receive His ability from God: "The Son can do nothing of himself." Whatever He knew, He learned as a lesson from above. Whatever He did, He did by Divine direction. Of the infinite treasures of the earth which were His, He would not turn so much as a stone to bread to feed His own hunger. On Himself He imposed those strict bounds which bind every created man; and these bounds to His life He faithfully respected. The very basis of His earthly existence—His consenting to be born of a woman—involved this amazing abnegation of all underived rights, and of all antecedent ownership. It involved that He claimed as His own and would use for His purposes nothing but what the Divine bounty has been pleased to confer on human nature in making it what it is. Even that He did not claim as properly His own by any Divine right, but only as His in the same way in which it is ours—as what a man receives from his Maker. Thus He became poor, with a creature's poverty.

(2) *He placed Himself within the restrictions of law.*—No man is free to do whatever he likes. A man is not his own property, not lord of himself, even in the sense of making what he will of himself, of his own powers, appetites, or energies. Born in a given rank, at a certain date, his little life-story is bounded from birth to death by circumstances over which he has a very moderate control indeed. The imperative of duty, the imperative of providence, and the imperative of society are lying upon him. This thing, and not that, he must eat, drink, do, or forbear from doing. Some impulses he may, some too he may not, indulge. Against this curbing and prescribing law, whether of morals or of social custom, all men fret; and Jewish men in particular were saddled with a yoke of ancient prescriptions peculiarly vexatious. Each day of the week, every act of social or domestic existence brought a Jew under some minute regulation which interfered with his freedom, and made him feel that in no sense whatever was he rich enough to be his own master. To all this Christ submitted. He became too poor to have a will of His own or to be a law unto Himself, for He was "made under the [Mosaic] law." Beautiful acts of love which with divinely free and uncommanded choice He was spontaneously prone to do, no one bidding Him, these very acts He now submitted to perform, because they were enjoined, with a distinct recognition of law in the doing of them,

and an express bowing of His own to Another's will. Painful acts of endurance, which went against nature and were very hard for flesh and blood, these, too, even when the goodness or the need of them could not be discerned for darkness of vision, He tutored His submissive heart to accept, and His obedient will to do. Thus, also, He became very poor, with the poverty of a subject.

(3) *He came into our place of poverty even as sinners.*—Jesus walked on earth with a forfeited life: His own, indeed, to lay down or to take again (as He well knew), had He but chosen to assert His rightful claim, or to use what He possessed; yet no longer His own, in fact, because He had devoted it to the law, given it away for a ransom, consecrated it for a sacrifice. Here was the acme of self-impoverishment. He held not even Himself to be properly His own. On the contrary, He held Himself to be a ransom for our transgression, a price due, a person doomed; and so gave Himself to justice, to be handled at the pleasure of that righteous Father who had given Him this commandment. Himself He would not save, but committed Himself to Him who judgeth righteously. Thus poor beyond all poverty did He become, who was the most rich God and Lord of earth and heaven!

¶ In Paris M. Coillard had the happiness of baptizing Semoindji Stephen, a Christian boy whom he had brought from the Zambesi, in the presence of a large assemblage of friends and helpers who heard his confession of faith, and to whom it was proof of his ministry. Once when they were visiting the Guinness family at Cliff College, who had treated this boy very kindly, the lad came to his master's room one night after every one had gone to bed. He was sobbing violently, and it was long before he could control himself to speak. At last he said, "Oh, I never understood before what you gave up when you came to bring us the *thuto* (Gospel). I did not know your home was so different. With us, you know how it is, when we meet strangers we fly from each other, and each man seeks his weapon. When we go from village to village we meet only enemies who hate us. Here, you go from one home to another: all are friends, all is love and confidence and welcome. I know now what it must have cost you to leave it all for us."[1]

3. The poverty of Jesus was purely voluntary. He stooped to it. He embraced it. He was rich enough in the purposes of

[1] C. W. Mackintosh, *Coillard of the Zambesi*, 413.

His love to become poor No one took from off His brow the crown of Heaven, He laid it aside; no one stripped Him of His royal robes, He unrobed Himself; no one paralysed the arm of His power, of Himself He chose our weakness; no one shrouded Him in mortal flesh, of His own will He assumed the limitations and bonds of our nature. He laid down the life of heaven for the life of earth, as He laid down the life of earth for the life of heaven. "I lay down my life," He said. "No man taketh it from me, but I lay it down of myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again." The wealth of His poverty must for ever wear the crown of all His riches. Within the moral necessities of His own nature, in view of the requirements of ours, He possessed a free and eager joy, which led Him "out from God," and brought Him "into the world," to become "poor that we might become rich."

¶ Man, what can seem to thee bitter or hard to bear, when thou dost rightly consider that He who was in the form of God, and from all eternity in the light of the Holiest, and who was born therefrom, was as a beam and as the substance of God: that He comes into the cell and the slime of thy perverted nature, which is so unclean that all things, however pure in themselves, become impure and imperfect as they approach it; and that He, for thy sake, willed to become wholly immured therein?[1]

¶ Two hundred years ago, a mighty sovereign perceived that his people were rude, ignorant savages—backward in the arts of peace and war. He left, for a season, his realm in the hands of faithful councillors. He threw aside crown and sceptre. He arrayed himself in sordid raiment, and travelled to another land. Here as a shipwright he laboured with his hands, here he dwelt in a rude wooden cottage, here he mixed with common men. After a season, he returned to his own country, and made it great and powerful by the knowledge and skill he had acquired in the time of his disguise. This was what the patriotism of the Czar Peter of Muscovy induced him to do for the aggrandizement of his country. But a mightier than human kings has worn the disguise of humanity, the aspect of a slave, for us and our salvation![2]

4. The poverty of Jesus was the manifestation of His grace? What is grace? Grace is a free, undeserved benefit—a benefit

[1] Johannes Eckhart.

[2] *Literary Churchman*, xxxii. (1886), 532.

conferred without any merit, claim, or title on the part of the recipient. Grace is opposed to debt, to hire, or wages, or anything a man can obtain for himself or establish a right to. It is a gift in the most absolute sense of the word. This is the sense in which it is used in the text. The grace referred to here is the infinite grace of the Incarnation.

"Grace" is a beautiful word, expressive of a still more beautiful thing. It awakens our oldest and sweetest memories, stands at the heart of our most sacred associations. Men explain it by "favour," but the richest favour is poor grace. The Greek word which is in its root the cognate of the English term, was more suggestive to the Greek than even "grace" can be to the English mind. It runs back into a root expressive of joy, to be glad or happy. Now the happy is ever the benevolent man, the miserable is the malicious. The happy must create happiness, the joy of beatitude is beneficence. So He whose nature is gracious could not allow misery to prevail where He had designed happiness to abide. The sin that made sorrow was a pain to the perfection of God, and the necessity, born of grace, that had made Him Creator now made Him Redeemer. In "the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ" we see the beatitude of God stooping to work out the salvation or last beatitude of man.

¶ Grace is what God is to us: disgrace is what we are to God, until His grace has charmed us into unity with Himself. The disposition, or soul of Grace, is perfect love, unselfish Love; but we must also include Loveliness of form and robe, otherwise our conception will be one-sided and defective. The Love of God in Christ Jesus makes us adoringly thankful and joyous; but it will also make us exquisite forms of luminous humanity like the Beloved Throne-Man.[1]

## III.

### What He Purposed.

**"That ye through his poverty might become rich."**

1. Christ's stooping to poverty was entirely unselfish. "For your sakes he became poor." Nothing could have seemed less

[1] John Pulsford, *Stray Thoughts of a Life-Time*, 85.

calculated to enrich man than Christ's poverty; nothing has ever or anywhere so mightily added to the mass of the world's weal. For affirming that it would do so, Paul was charged with foolishness; in confessing that it has done so, we but acknowledge "the wisdom of God."

Here is the emphatic proof that God cares for the mass of men, cares for the poor, cares for man as man. Had Jesus been born in a palace people might still have doubted His message of the love of God. It would have seemed that there was something in poverty that was a degradation to Him. The poor would have thought that their position was despised. But the Son of God came as a poor man. That was the absolute proof that social differences were unknown and unregarded by the Heavenly Father.

¶ Abraham Lincoln used to say, "I think God loves the common people because He has made so many of them." So we may say that God loves the mass of men, loves the poor, because He sent His Son into the world as one of them. There would have been innumerable barriers between Christ and humanity if He had been born among the mighty of the earth. But coming in poverty He came as man to man, assuring the humblest that God loved and cared. We can scarcely measure the enrichment of the world which has come through this wondrous fact that "though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, that ye through his poverty might be rich."[1]

2. Our Lord's poverty enriches by making God's wealth current coin. In becoming poor Jesus Christ transmuted Divine wealth into a human coin that we can trade with; He translated heavenly ideas into the broken language of earth. The deepest cause of our abject poverty as moral and spiritual beings is our lack of God, of an overwhelming sense of His glorious presence. When Philip said, "Shew us the Father, and it sufficeth us," he uttered the deep and far-reaching need of humanity. He might have said, "We have heard of 'the Almighty,' with whom our father Abraham was familiar, and of 'the Jehovah' who declared His name unto Moses; but all the revelations of the past are dim and shadowy. Show us 'the Father.'" Jesus, bending over Philip, said, "Have I been so long time with you, and yet

[1] John Reid.

hast thou not known me, Philip? he that hath seen me hath seen the Father." You may see the Father's compassion shining through the tears which trickle down My cheeks; you may hear the accents of the Father's voice in the tones which address you now: you may feel the touch of a Father in the hand that grips you: you may feel the throbbings of a Father's love in this heart which beats in truest sympathy with you. The Father has limited Himself, has translated Himself into human form. "He that hath seen me hath seen the Father."

The alchemy of grace converts all events and circumstances into means and resources which belong to the believer. Men have searched in vain throughout the material world for the often-dreamed-of philosopher's stone, the touch of which should transmute the baser metals into gold. But in the spiritual world that stone has been found. It is "a chief corner stone, elect, precious." Those who find that Stone discern on it such inscriptions as these: "Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you." "All things work together for good to them that love God." "All things are yours; whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, or the world, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come; all are yours; and ye are Christ's; and Christ is God's."

¶ Blessed Francis, indeed, always welcomed poverty with a smiling countenance, though naturally it be apt to cast a gloom and melancholy upon the faces both of those who endure it and of those who only dread it. Involuntary poverty is surly and discontented, for it is forced and against the will. Voluntary poverty, on the contrary, is joyous, free, and light-hearted. He would never allow himself to be called poor. To my objection that our revenues were so very small that we must be really considered poor, he replied, "If he is poor who lives by work, and who eats the fruit of his labour, we may very well be reckoned as such; but if we regard the degree of poverty in which our Lord and His Apostles lived, we must perforce consider ourselves rich. After all, possessing honestly all that is necessary for food and clothing, ought we not to be content? Whatever is more than this is only evil, care, superfluity, wanting which we shall have less of an account to render. Happy is poverty, said a stoic, if it is cheerful poverty; and if it is that, it is really not poverty at all, or only poverty of a kind that is far preferable to the *riches*

of the most wealthy, which are amassed with difficulty, preserved with solicitude, and lost with regret." [1]

¶ At the ninth Conference, held in October 1752, at Bristol, it was agreed that the Methodist preachers should receive a stipend of £12 per annum, in order to provide themselves with necessaries. Their list of "necessaries" must have been of Spartan brevity. But more than twelve years afterwards, at the Conference of 1765, a deputation from the York circuit was admitted and allowed to plead against the "large sum of £12 a year!" Before 1752 each circuit made its own financial arrangements with the preachers, and sometimes they were of a quaint order. As late as 1764, the practice in the Norwich circuit, for example, was to divide the love-feast money among the preachers, and "this," says Myles, with a certain accent of melancholy, "was very little indeed." When before in history was there such an inexpensive order of preachers as these early helpers of Wesley? They laid up much treasure in heaven, but had very empty pockets on earth. One of them, John Jane, died at Epworth. His entire wardrobe was insufficient to pay his funeral expenses, which amounted to £1, 17s. 3d. All the money he possessed was 1s. 4d., "enough," records Wesley briefly, "for any unmarried preacher of the Gospel to leave to his executors." [2]

3. The wealth provided by the Redeemer corresponds as to nature with the poverty which He saw in men, and which He Himself assumed. We are poor spiritually, and He enriches us with all spiritual good. We are poor by reason of sin, and He makes us rich in righteousness. We are poor in that we are without God in the world, and He gives us God as the portion of our souls. He causes His people to become rich with His own ancestral wealth, making them in a true sense "partakers of the Divine nature." He was not content to be rich while we were poor. He was content to be poor that we might be rich.

¶ David Hill returned to Wusueh invigorated and cheered, and soon after, in June 1877, he wrote the following letter to his brother:—

"As to help to the poor, I find that here in Wusueh these representatives of our King come right before me, and the thought comes home that I ought to do something for them. The sight of suffering poverty is very touching, very mysterious, very

[1] J. P. Camus, *The Spirit of St. Francis de Sales*, 133.
[2] W. H. Fitchett, *Wesley and his Century*, 216.

sad. If we saw and knew as much of it as Jesus did, we should be men of sorrows too; and the real philosophy of life is to live near to it, mix with those burdened with it, and, as far as we can, relieve it."

It is impossible to pass over silently David Hill's "real philosophy of life,"—"to live near suffering poverty, mix with those burdened with it, and as far as possible relieve it." Such a philosophy goes so deep to the heart of things that the casual and superficial observer will pass it by. In what does our life consist? Does it consist in having all we can, in getting all we can, in amassing riches, in collecting comforts and luxuries, in indulging our taste, in taking pleasure in many ways? If so, we know nothing of this philosophy. Does life consist in character, in being, in giving out? Then to such things this philosophy is intimately related. Once grasp the fact that life is a strenuous endeavour to be and to do, and we find ourselves on an ascending plane. And as it has been well pointed out, the pursuit of the strenuous and philanthropic life involves the denial of luxuries and self-indulgence for ourselves almost as an incident. Directly we begin to care greatly for the needs of others, in this absorbing interest we lose insensibly the desire to cushion our own life in ease and seek our own comforts, and we find that the highest and most unselfish ideals have the greatest return, lead to the widest outlook, to the deepest experiences, to the most perfect joys; or in other words, the true philosophy of life is given to us by our Lord when He says, "They that lose their life shall find it."[1]

¶ The character, the Divine grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, has so affected our eyes that they cannot at first sight catch the condescension, ay, the humiliation, ay, the even forbidding aspect of this office which He fills. His poverty hath made all things about it so rich that, looked at in His presence, they shine with supernatural splendour. But wait till the first soiled foot comes in sight, and the office of the servant is asked at your hand, and the moment to strip and gird with the towel is come. And then, be it but to wait in the house to let another out; to lose some pleasure to help somebody else; to speak cheerfully in the morning or when others enter the room; to be gracious, pitiful, courteous—be it but to help a child with his lessons, or hold an infant so that it will not cry; to give a weak one an arm to lean on, a struggling one a hand to hold, a fighting one a cheer to inspire—be it but to pick a stone out of somebody's path; to remove by self-denial the temptation that will lead another to fall, the occasion that will bring an angry word; to mention to a friend

[1] J. E. Hellier, *Life of David Hill*, 98.

his fault by himself—be it but to go two steps with him who asks us to go one; to spend ourselves for those whose company we gain little from; to instil a little music into one whose existence is a monotone; to visit somebody who is lonely, or sit by somebody who is sick—be it but to stand by one who is despised; or quietly company with an outcast—be it but evening by evening to wash with gentle hands the dust and toil of the day from one another's soul—be it but to give some one a happy half-hour to enrich his life or lighten his burden—ah, how hard it is, but how blessed! What humble work, but how fit for Apostles, how fit for Christ![1]

[1] R. W. Barbour, *Thoughts*, 10.

# The Captivity of Thought.

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## The Captivity of Thought.

**Bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ.—2 Cor. x. 5.**

These words form part of a highly-figurative description of the Apostle's employment as a minister of Christ. He compares himself to a warrior attacking some strongly fortified place, overcoming all opposition, making captives of all who were in it, and enforcing their obedience to the commander under whom he fought. The stronghold which he represents himself as attacking is the mind of man, which is naturally strong in error and prejudice and full of hostility to God. The weapons which the Apostle tells us he employed in this warfare were not carnal. The nature of the enemy shows that they could not be such as soldiers commonly use, neither were they such as men are apt to rely on who seek to convince and persuade—not winning manners or eloquence or philosophy; but, since the Apostle represents them as "mighty before God to the casting down of strong holds"; casting down imaginations, and every high thing that is exalted against the knowledge of God, and "bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ," these weapons must be spiritual, owing all their efficiency to the Spirit of God. The completeness of their success is marked by the wonderful result described in the text; every thought is brought into captivity to the obedience of Christ.

¶ It has been urged that the recent history of Cilicia itself may have well suggested this language to St. Paul. The Apostle's native country had been the scene of some very fierce struggles in the wars against Mithridates and the pirates; and we are told that the latter war was ended, not sixty years before the Apostle's birth, only by the reduction of one hundred and twenty strongholds and the capture of more than ten thousand prisoners. The dismantled ruins may have easily and naturally impressed the boyish imagination of Saul of Tarsus with a vivid sense of the

destructive energy of the military power of Rome; but the Apostle of the nations remembers these earlier impressions only to give them a spiritual application. The weapons of his warfare are not carnal; the standard under which he fights is a more sacred sign than that of the Cæsar; the operations which he projects are to be carried out in a territory more difficult of conquest than any which kept the conquerors of the world at bay. He is invading the region of human thought, and as he fights for God, he is sternly resolved upon conquest.[1]

## I.

### The Power of Thought.

1. Thought is the distinctive mark of man. "On earth there's nothing great but man; in man there's nothing great but mind"; and the great function of mind is to think. The ability to think is man's great distinction. If other creatures think, it is not for their thought that they are distinguished; but, man without thought is destitute of the great human characteristic. By the exercise of thought—transferring what is without within—we can carry the "world in our hearts." And by thought we can also outwardly embody the creations of our minds, and thus give a soul to the material, and a body to things spiritual; by thought we can recall the past and live in it again, anticipate the future, and inhabit it as our home; by thought we can walk as seeing the invisible, and dwell in a world which transcends the senses; by thought we can ascend to heaven and God, and also descend to him who, as *anti-theos*, sets himself against God.

¶ In the human world, we find thought expressing itself in a thousand ways, visible and invisible—in stone and wood and iron, in colours and sounds, in laws and institutions. It is the thought of the constructor that makes the iron vessel float upon the water; it is the thought of the general that wins the battle. In all these cases, too, the thought precedes the expression, the materialization, as well as giving to the latter its value. Just as the human world, with its roads and cultivated fields, its streets and buildings, its machines and engines, its pictures and statuary, its colleges and hospitals, its libraries, and orchestras, is the expression of the thought of man, so the vast universe, with its

[1] H. P. Liddon.

numberless worlds obedient to one law, and its countless forms of life, is the expression of the thought of God; and, just as in every case where human thought has expressed itself, the conception preceded the embodiment—as, for instance, the plan preceded the building, or the battle—so the thought of God must have preceded the creation of the universe. Thought is, in fact, necessarily the *prius* of a universe which is permeated, penetrated, by thought—which is built up on thought. And that the universe we know is built up on thought is proved every day by the discovery of new laws of nature. It is because the universe is permeated by thought that man can hope to understand it, to interpret it, by the light of reason; were it not intelligible, the work of the scientist—of the astronomer, the chemist, the geologist—would be idle.[1]

(1) *Thought is in a sense the material with which we work.*—All work is the working out and working up of thought. The actual amount of this material present in the world, at any given time, defies calculation. Yet, that which exists is as nothing in comparison with what, at any moment, might be called into existence. Thought is capable of indefinite multiplication. To what extent is it not multiplied in seasons of excitement and hours of inspiration? What is the amount of thought produced in a community impassioned by some event which awakens their depths? The critical periods of history discover mines of inexhaustible wealth, unsuspected in ordinary times, and reveal in men powers of vast and indefinite expansion. If we sometimes hear men talk of being used-up, of the need of travel, of fresh scenes to replenish their exhausted resources, is it not because they forget to use themselves? "He who would bring home the Indies must carry them out." Some of those whose thoughts continue to sow the world with ceaseless harvests never wandered from the site that gave them birth. He alone can be used-up who has not learnt to use himself.

¶ Which of us feels, or knows, that he wants peace? There are two ways of getting it, if you do want it. The first is wholly in your own power; to make yourselves nests of pleasant thoughts. Those are nests on the sea indeed, but safe beyond all others; only they need much art in the building. None of us yet know, for none of us have yet been taught in early youth, what fairy palaces we may build of beautiful thought—proof against all

[1] *James Hutchison Stirling*, 163.

adversity. Bright fancies, satisfied memories, noble histories, faithful sayings, treasure-houses of precious and restful thoughts, which care cannot disturb, nor pain make gloomy, nor poverty take away from us—houses built without hands, for our souls to live in.[1]

(2) *Our thoughts are the raw material out of which character is formed.*—What a man thinks determines not only what he says, does and sees, but also what he is. "As a man thinketh, so is he." Our whole character gradually takes on the hue and complexion of our inward thinking. Naturalists affirm that the size of the fish found in Central Africa is subtly influenced by the dimensions of the lake in which they live, the same species being larger or smaller in proportion to the scale of their habitat. Whether that is a fact or not, it is certainly true that if we live in the environment of sordid, petty, and grovelling thoughts, our character becomes correspondingly small, shrivelled and emaciated; whereas, if we rise up into the region of noble and spacious conceptions of life and truth, our character will inevitably expand in proportion to the dimensions of its mental environment. Character derives its substance and form from the influence distilled from the mental processes. Noble thinking, then, ought by rights to result in noble living. This is what is in St. Peter's mind when he bids us arm ourselves with the mind of Christ. He knew very well that the shortest and safest way for a man to reproduce Christ's character was to try to put on His mind.

¶ The soul is dyed the colour of its thoughts.[2]

¶ Nothing is lost; even unwritten thoughts do their work. Good thoughts, like breezes from the mountains, purify the moral atmosphere, and the resulting actions. Evil thoughts shape the character, and spread disastrous consequences, for they are positively infectious. We are thus all of us fearfully responsible.[3]

¶ When thoughts have sown man's pathway with happiness and peace they go on to determine character and futurity. Each life memorable for goodness and nobility has for its motive power some noble thought. Each hero has climbed up to immortality upon those golden rounds called good thoughts. Here is that cathedral spirit, John Milton. In his loneliness and blindness his mind was his kingdom. He loved to think of things true and

[1] Ruskin, *The Eagle's Nest*, 205 (*Works*, xxii. 262).

[2] Marcus Aurelius.

[3] *George Frederic Watts*, iii. 325.

pure and of good report. Oft at midnight upon the poet's ear there fell the sound of celestial music, which he afterwards transposed into his "Paradise Regained." Dying, it was given him to proudly say: "I am not one of those who have disgraced beauty of sentiment by deformity of conduct, nor the maxims of the freeman by the actions of the slave, but by the grace of God, I have kept my soul unsullied."[1]

(3) *Thoughts are the most potent weapons in the world.*—The carnal weapon may subdue, but it cannot convince. Rome may make a desolation and call it peace, but it has only driven the fever of revolt inward. So long as thought is unsubdued, despotism is in peril. The only real conquest of man is the conquest of his thought; and the long and bloody catalogue of religious wars, martyrdoms, and persecutions, proves, or ought to prove, to us conclusively the folly of all carnal weapons when directed against the souls of men. So, then, the truth that St. Paul teaches is that the world is to be won for Christ only by the conquest which the ideas and thoughts of Christ make over the souls of men.

¶ All the great changes in the life of one man or in the life of the whole of humanity begin and are achieved in thought only. No matter what external changes may take place in the lives of men, no matter how men may preach the necessity of changing their sentiments and acts, the lives of men will not change, unless a change takes place in their thoughts. But let a change take place in thought, and sooner or later, according to the importance of the change, it will take place in the feelings and actions and lives of men, and just as inevitably as the ship changes its direction after the turn of the rudder.[2]

2. Thought has the rare power of exercising control over the inferior powers. A man of rightly-directed thought cannot well be a low, bad man—a man given to excess. He who is habitually familiar with thought's pale face of just-proportioned beauty will observe the limits and measurements of truth, and be a man known for his temperance and moderation in all things. Earnest and well-chosen occupation of mind disengages the body from every excess, and disqualifies it for low pursuits. Well-directed activity of mind not only preserves the body in manly health, but acquires wisdom, which is the health of the soul; "she is more

[1] N. D. Hillis, *A Man's Value to Society*, 114.

[2] Tolstoy, *Miscellaneous Letters and Essays* (*Works*, xxiii. 57).

precious than rubies: and all the things thou canst desire are not to be compared unto her. Length of days is in her right hand; and in her left hand riches and honour."

(1) *Thought generates feeling.*—Out of thought there comes feeling, just as fragrance is born of a rose, and a noisome stench of a cesspool. Our sentiments are the exhalations of our thoughts. The heart is the vessel in which are garnered all the odours which steal from the thoughts in the mind. Every thought tends to create a feeling. There are no thoughts devoid of influence. From every thought there proceeds an influence which goes to the making of a disposition. The fragrance of a single rose in a large room may be imperceptible, but, perceptible or not, the sweet influence is there, surely diffusing itself throughout the atmosphere. Bring a score of such roses together, and what was imperceptible in the one becomes a strong and grateful incense in them all. A single thought in the mind may exhale an almost imperceptible influence. But the influence is there, and steals like an intensely subtle odour into the heart. Let the thoughts be multiplied, and the delicate odours unite to form an intensely powerful influence which we call a feeling, a sentiment, a disposition. But suppose the thought is not like a sweet rose, but like a poisonous nightshade. Here again the influence of a single thought may be too subtle for our detection, but let the thoughts be multiplied, and the poisonous exhalations will unite to form a sentiment of most destructive strength.

(2) *Each thought creates its own feeling, and always of one kind.*—There are certain thoughts which, if we will take them into our minds, will inevitably create the feeling of envy. Take other thoughts into our mind and from them will be born the sentiment of jealousy. Take other thoughts into the mind and the heart will speedily swell with pride. Fill the mind with another kind of thought and in the heart will gather the sweet and tender sentiment of pity. Each thought creates its own sentiment, and we cannot help it. If we choose the rose we must take the fragrance with it. If we choose the nightshade we must take the stench with it. Take the thought and we must of necessity take the sentiment which the thought creates.

(3) *The thinking part of us is closely connected with the will.*—The prime minister of individual conduct and character is the

will. We never do anything without first of all willing to do it. But before the will determines upon any action it consults its advisers, the soul's cabinet, which is composed in the main of three ministers—feelings, conscience, thoughts. It is usually upon the advice of these three counsellors that the will acts.[1]

¶ Do no violence to yourself, respect in yourself the oscillations of feeling. They are your life and your nature; One wiser than you ordained them. Do not abandon yourself altogether either to instinct or to will. Instinct is a siren, will a despot. Be neither the slave of your impulses and sensations of the moment, nor of an abstract and general plan; be open to what life brings from within and without, and welcome the unforeseen; but give to your life unity, and bring the unforeseen within the lines of your plan. Let what is natural in you raise itself to the level of the spiritual, and let the spiritual become once more natural. Thus will your development be harmonious, and the peace of heaven will shine upon your brow;—always on condition that your peace is made, and that you have climbed your Calvary.[2]

> Lulled in the countless chambers of the brain,
> Our thoughts are linked by many a hidden chain.
> Awake but one, and lo! what myriads rise!
> Each stamps its image as the other flies!
> Each, as the various avenues of sense
> Delight or sorrow to the soul dispense,
> Frightens or fades; yet all, with magic art,
> Control the latent fibres of the heart.[3]

## II.

### The Mastery of Thought.

1. Our thoughts need to be mastered and disciplined. "Casting down imaginations," that is, reasonings, "and every high thing," every lofty edifice, "which is exalted against the knowledge of God, and bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ." St. Paul's stoutest enemy in Corinth was intellectual pride. The pride of reason infected the spirit of the whole Christian society in Corinth. In minor matters of taste it would select its ministers, and divide the Church into followers of

[1] M. G. Archibald. [2] *Amiel's Journal* (trans. by Mrs. Humphry Ward), 22.
[3] Samuel Rogers.

favourite preachers; in the graver matters of faith, it stumbled at a miracle, many of the members denying the resurrection of the dead and, by implication, the rising again of Christ; in the fellowship meetings and social walks of the congregation, the educated classes ridiculed the sensitive scruples and simplicity of their more ignorant brethren.

The Apostle wished these Corinthians to cast down anything that was fictitious in their Christian faith, anything that was merely the creation of men's ingenious reasonings, and that exalted itself against Divine revelation. They were, on the one hand, to cast aside human imaginations, and, on the other hand, they were to bring all their thoughts to the mastery of Christ's Spirit. If it was necessary for Christian converts so early to put away imaginations, we may be sure that the effort to return to the real Christ will repeatedly be required in Christian history. The generations of believers will need time and time again to cast aside fictions, and to bring their thoughts into captivity to the true Christ. The world will be always prone to lose the real Christ, and He will need to be found again many times in the thought and the life of the world.

(1) If a man does not master his thoughts, some other power will, some power of the world, of the flesh, or of the devil, or all these powers combined. Now, the central character of the power of our thoughts makes it a first necessity that we should lead them if we are to remain in possession of ourselves. Thought awakens feeling, inflames the passions, subdues the will and commands action. Therefore thoughts unled will be to a man what winds and waves are to a ship under canvas but without a rudder, or what steam is to a locomotive without the guiding rail —a driving and destructive power.

¶ Thoughts often come into the mind like a shadow, and then everything is dark and sad looking, or they come stealing along like sunbeams over the cornfield, and everything is brighter and better for them. Some thoughts come like a song, but you cannot see the bird that is singing, and some drip, drip, like the plashing of drops in a dark well. Thoughts? Why, they are the most difficult things in the world to get hold of, and yet we are to bring them into captivity.[1]

[1] J. R. Howatt, *The Children's Pulpit*, 246.

¶ The one moral point you mention I should urge you to take vigorously in hand, with all courage and hope—I mean the persisting temptation of evil thoughts. You must not be too much surprised, or disheartened, at this. With some saintly persons it continues, at intervals, for many years. The main thing is to determine with yourself that you will accept no compromise in the matter. It is fatal if you think you must give way. You may be beaten again and again, but always renew the attack with the determination to obtain an absolute victory. It is marvellous what God's grace can do. Guard your sight strictly in what you read, in newspapers and books, pictures, photographs, persons—be very strict with yourself in this—all depends on crushing an evil thought at the *beginning* and instantly slaying it.[1]

(2) A reverential mind is necessary for the reception of truth. The mind that has no effective sense of the mysterious never enters into the full and fruitful possession of truth. We are fitted and qualified to receive revelations only when we are solemnly sensible of the great secret which shrouds itself behind the veil. There is, therefore, need that men who are setting out in quest of truth should heed the counsel of the days of old, and take their shoes from off their feet. Surely in this counsel there is significance for every age. We must take the shoes from off our feet. We must tread softly, as it were on tiptoe, with a hushed expectancy, that we may not miss the smallest Voice that speaks out of the secret place. We must step reverently and quietly up to the most familiar bush if, perchance, it may unveil to us some secret Presence of the Lord.

¶ "I have a plant called reverence," says the beloved and genial Autocrat, "and it needs constant watering." Yes, and it is possible for us to water the plant every day. We need not wait for some mighty and phenomenal contingency to cultivate our sense of reverence and of awe. It is best and most safely trained by smaller cultures, by the influence of the apparent trifle. Let us seek to train it while standing before the commonplace. Let us take the shoes from off our feet when we approach a familiar bush. Let us bow in low obeisance when God presents Himself to us in the guise of a common carpenter. When we take a crust of bread into our hands let us contemplate it with a reverence which will turn the common meal into a sacramental feast. Let us cultivate a reverent, lowly mind, and even the least of God's

[1] *Edward King, Bishop of Lincoln*, 230.

creations will be greatly significant with the mystic presence of the King.[1]

¶ Reverence for God, and, in general, reverence for anything that is high and great, is a matter needing very special attention at the present time. Wordsworth told us that "we live by admiration"; but a century of scientific and industrial and commercial progress has tended to an immense increase in man's belief in himself, his efficiency, and his will, and to a corresponding decline of the habit of veneration. It is striking that in modern books on Theosophy the ancient doctrine is being repeated with as much insistence as ever. The first stage in the initiation of theosophic disciples is the laying aside of the exercise of criticism, and leaving the soul open to receive and venerate great thoughts and the memories of great men.[2]

2. The only captivity which thought endures is the captivity of the ideal. Every man has some ideal, and his ideal is the governing factor in his thought. We must remember that thoughts are not random and elusive, as we often suppose them to be, but that they fall as truly under the laws of cause and effect as the blossom on the bough, the fruit on the tree; or, to use a more correct figure, we may say that they have centres and orbits; they cohere toward the master-thought as steel filings to the magnetic bar; they move in fixed courses as the stars move on measurable and mathematic roads.

Thought may be led, but cannot be forced. To lead our thoughts, we must observe the nature of the mind, which is susceptible of influence but not of force. Our leading, therefore, must not be arbitrary, but in accordance with law and order—truth and justice. There is nothing more repugnant to the mind than the tyranny of wilfulness; but the appeal of law and order, truth and righteousness, accords with its nature, and awakens their own deep-laid echoes in answering assent. No man is able to respect the arbitrary dicta of his own will, but the authority of truth and goodness commends itself. While wilfulness is an unnatural crime against the will, and arouses the whole force of nature against it, the sublime authority of truth calls forth the homage of all our powers as being accordant with them, and

[1] J. H. Jowett, *From Strength to Strength*, 117.
[2] John Kelman, *The Road*, ii. 163.

capable of awakening their pre-established harmonies, and thus creating, as it were, their response to the sphere of their satisfied life. No other authority than that which commends itself to the mind can be sustained; for, though it may have outward support, it is destitute of inward, and its centre of gravity, if one may so express it, falling without itself, constantly tends to overthrow what has been arbitrarily set up.

¶ We have all heard that curious story of recent astronomy regarding the fortunes of Algol, which has been called the Demon star, because of the inexplicable variations in its brilliancy. At last those eccentricities have been explained and have resolved themselves into a starry order; for we know now that Algol revolves round a centre we cannot see, and all its movements are regulated by this unseen and unsuspected centre. So we may say, find the centre of a man's thoughts, and you have the explication of his life. The orbit of his life is absolutely ruled by his central ideal, and is held to it by an invincible moral gravitation.[1]

(1) Christ captures our thought by the subduing charm of His own personality. No sooner is He "lifted up" than our whole nature submits to Him. Our affections are won by His charms, our will gladly submits to His will, and our thoughts become free in His captivation. With His reign set up in the heart, submission becomes a devotion, obedience a worship, and the whole life moves in charmed circles of rectitude and peace. The powers of His life, His light, His love are, therefore, the "weapons" of a warfare which are "mighty before God to the casting down of strong holds, casting down imaginations, and every high thing that is exalted against the knowledge of God, and bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ."

¶ There is one power, and only one, that can draw after it all the multitudinous heaped waters of the weltering ocean, and that is the quiet silver moon in the heavens, which pulls the tidal wave, into which melt and merge all currents and small breakers, and rolls it round the whole earth. And so Christ, shining down lambent and gentle, but changeless, from the darkest of our skies, will draw, in one great surge of harmonized motion, all the else contradictory currents of our stormy souls. "My peace I give unto you."[2]

[1] W. J. Dawson, *The Comrade-Christ*, 217.
[2] A. Maclaren, *The Holy of Holies*, 17.

¶ It was said of Greece, when made captive by the power of Rome, that, by her charms, she turned vanquishment to victory, and conquered her conquerors. And He who is the Master of all charms, when He suffered Himself to be imprisoned in the underworld, returned triumphant, leading captivity captive. He is the heavenly magnet which, from amid the ruins of our nature, will gather together every fragment, adjust part to part, and restore every vestige of His long-lost image. He is the Sun which will make and govern the day of our reconstituted life. He is the spring of all our powers, and will regulate our activity and secure our rest. He is our life-fountain, whose streams will preserve health, and impart vigour to our whole nature.[1]

(2) We must accept the yoke of Christ; we must bring our thoughts to the obedience of Christ. A man says "I cannot help my thoughts": so far as deeds go, he may be moral and reputable enough; but in his thoughts, malignity, or passion, or avarice, or impurity riots unchecked. He assumes that, so long as he does not commit murder, he may think it; so long as he keeps within the bounds of morality, he may imagine immoralities. Men will cherish the most violent animosities, and think that it does not matter so long as they do not act upon them. They will read the most vile books, and suppose that no blame attaches to them so long as their actual conduct remains pure. Or, if they admit that they are tortured by such thoughts and imaginations, that they come unsolicited and are hated and dreaded by them, yet they will repeat that they cannot control them, and therefore cannot help them. The simple fact remains that thought can be controlled.

Do not we remember how in those vanished days of schoollife the thought seemed resolute to elude us, and flew off everywhere on wings of its own, and defied recapture? Did we not hear the bird singing in the tree outside the schoolhouse window, and the leaves talking to the breeze, and instantly our thought and fancy vanished into blue distances, and the dry facts of the book that lay before us were utterly forgotten? But gradually we discovered the art of fixing our thought on our task, and knew that there was no learning for us in any other way. Moreover, we discovered, too, that the blue sky was all the bluer, and the green fields all the fresher to us, after the successful effort to

[1] W. Pulsford, *Trinity Church Sermons*, 42.

master the duty that met us at our desk. We brought our thought into captivity to the obedience of knowledge, and so we grew in wisdom. We must bring our thought into captivity to Christ, and so also shall we grow in grace. Discipline is the very pulse of progress, and to win the battle of goodness, of self-mastery, of character, demands a harder training than any other battle-field to which this life can call us.

¶ Professor Huxley once defined genius as a mind under perfect control—a servant always at heel, ready at any call to do its duty, and quick to respond to any demand that the will can legitimately make upon it. The process of education itself is nothing more or less than the art of controlling and disciplining the thought. We need to learn on what subjects to fix our thought, within what limits to confine it, how best to render it available; and education affords us precisely this discipline. And so it is in the Christian life: we must begin by the discipline of the thought. We must steadfastly refuse to think evil, and must set our minds by resolute effort toward good. We must gather up each delicate fibre of imagination and fancy, and weave it into the fabric of our religion, and we can do so only by the most sedulous and unwearying vigilance.[1]

¶ What is a true musician? Surely one who in that department is obedient to the thought of God. He is simply an interpreter of God's laws of harmony. No man created those laws which hold in music; no man can alter them by one hair's breadth. All he can do is to discover, interpret, and obey. Some of the great musicians have not been noted as religious men—*i.e.* they have not been noted as obedient to God's moral and spiritual law. So much the worse for them; but inasmuch as they were great in music, it was so by the strictness of their obedience to God's mind in that one department of it. They excelled their fellow-men herein because they were quicker to discern God's thought there, and quicker to obey it.[2]

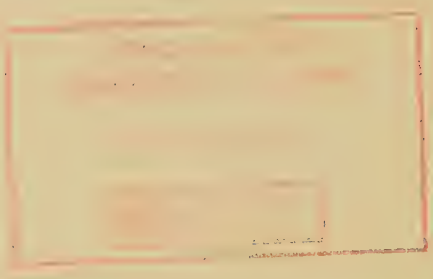
Just as I shape the purport of my thought,
Lord of the Universe, shape Thou my lot.
Let each ill thought that in my heart may be,
Mould circumstance and bring ill luck to me.

Until I weed the garden of my mind
From all that is unworthy and unkind,
Am I not master of my mind, dear Lord?
Then as I *think*, so must be my reward.

[1] W. J. Dawson, *The Comrade-Christ*, 215. [2] J. Brierley.

Who sows in weakness, cannot reap in strength,
That which we plant, we gather in at length.
Great God of Justice, be Thou just to me,
And as my thoughts, so let my future be.[1]

[1] Ella Wheeler Wilcox, *Poems of Experience*, 4.



# Power in Weakness.

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## Power in Weakness.

**And he hath said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee; for my power (A.V. strength) is made perfect in weakness.—2 Cor. xii. 9.**

1. St. Paul has just told the Corinthians of favours strange, rare, wonderful, which had been granted him, of "a man in Christ," by all acknowledged to be himself, who was "caught up to the third heaven," "into Paradise," who had there heard words more wonderful than could find utterance again in any dialect of earth, as indeed must be the case with any words of heaven; who had there glimpses of glory vouchsafed him such as have seldom been permitted to any child of man while yet abiding in this tenement of clay. But, he goes on to say, "Lest I should be exalted above measure through the abundance of the revelations, there was given to me a thorn in the flesh, the messenger of Satan to buffet me, lest," as he repeats it, "I should be exalted above measure," and that which was meant to be his wealth should turn out not wealth, but poverty, not a lifting up, but the most terrible casting down of all.

2. What was St. Paul's thorn in the flesh? The resources of imagination have been exhausted; people are returning to the obvious. The thorn in the flesh was something painful, which affected the Apostle's body; it was something in its nature purely physical, not a solicitation to any kind of sin, such as sensuality or pride, else he would not have ceased to pray for its removal; it was something terribly humbling, if not humiliating—an affection which might well have excited the contempt and loathing of those who beheld it (Gal. iv. 14, which probably refers to this subject); it had begun after, if not in consequence of, the rapture just described, and stood in a spiritual, if not in a physical, relation to it: it was, if not chronic or periodic, at least recurrent; the Apostle knew it would never leave him. What known malady,

incident to human nature, fulfils all these conditions, it is not possible with perfect certainty to say.

The Apostle himself is not interested in it as a physical affection. He speaks of it because of its spiritual significance, and because of the wonderful spiritual experiences he has had in connexion with it. It was given him, he says; but by whom? When we think of the purpose—to save him from spiritual pride—we instinctively answer, "God." And that, it can hardly be doubted, would have been the Apostle's own answer. Yet he does not hesitate to call it in the same breath "a messenger of Satan." The name is dictated by the inborn, ineradicable shrinking of the soul from pain; that agonizing, humiliating, annihilating thing we feel at the bottom of our hearts, is not really of God, even when it does His work. In His perfect world pain shall be no more. It does not need science, but experience, to put these things together, and to understand at once the evil and the good of suffering. Paul, at first, like all men, found the evil overpowering. The pain, the weakness, the degradation of his malady, were intolerable. He could not understand that only a pressure so pitiless and humbling would preserve him from spiritual pride and a spiritual fall.

¶ Paul's thorn was not pleasant to him. He prayed to be rid of it. But when he found it had come to stay, he made friends with it swiftly. It was no longer how to dismiss, but how to entertain. He stopped groaning, and began glorying. It was clear to him that it was God's will, and that meant new opportunity, new victory, new likeness to Christ. What God means is always too good to be lost, and is worth all it costs to learn. Let us learn as swiftly as we may. Time is short.[1]

¶ We are all slow to learn anything like this. We think we can take warning, that a word will be enough, that at most the memory of a single pang will suffice to keep us safe. But pains remain with us, and the pressure is continuous and unrelieved, because the need of constraint and of discipline is ceaseless. The crooked branch will not bend in a new curve if it is tied to it only for half an hour. The sinful bias in our natures—to pride, to sensuality, to falsehood, or whatever else—will not be cured by one sharp lesson. The commonest experience in human life is that the man whom sickness and pain have humbled for the moment, the very moment their constraint is lifted, resumes his

[1] M. D. Babcock, *Thoughts for Every-Day Living*, 8.

old habit. He does not think so, but it is really the thorn that has been keeping him right; and when its sharpness is blunted, the edge is taken from his conscience too.[1]

3. St. Paul besought the Lord, that is Christ, thrice, that this thing might depart from him. The Lord, we may be sure, had full sympathy with that prayer. He Himself had had His agony, and prayed the Father thrice that, if it were possible, the cup of pain might pass from Him. He prayed, indeed, in express submission to the Father's will; the voice of nature was not allowed in Him to urge an unconditional peremptory request. Perhaps in St. Paul on this occasion—certainly often in most men—it is nature—the flesh and not the spirit—that prompts the prayer. But God is all the while guarding the spirit's interest as the higher, and this explains the many real answers to prayer which seem to be refusals. A refusal *is* an answer if it is so given that God and the soul may thenceforth understand one another. It was thus that St. Paul was answered by Christ: "He hath said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee: for [my] power is made perfect in weakness."

The answer is, in form and in substance, a gentle refusal of the form of the petition, but it is a more than granting of its essence. For the best answer to such a prayer, and the answer which a true man means when he prays, "Take away the burden," need not be the external removal of the pressure of the sorrow, but the infusing of power to sustain it. There are two ways of lightening a burden; one is diminishing its actual weight, the other is increasing the strength of the shoulder that bears it. And the latter is God's way, and Christ's way, of dealing with us.

¶ Do not pray for easy lives. Pray to be stronger men and women. Do not pray for tasks equal to your powers. Pray for powers equal to your tasks. Then the doing of your work shall be no miracle. Every day you shall wonder at yourself, at the richness of life which has come to you by the grace of God.[2]

¶ February 20th, 1870.—This morning, perhaps, I should have begun with my old grumbling, "A weary week," etc. To-night I feel as if I never should grumble again, such a spirit has come on me. It is as if my eyes were opened by God to see the self-spirit pass away, and to be able with a clear glance to read truth.

[1] J. Denney. [2] Phillips Brooks.

I feel so happy in the many blessings of being able to do His work, so strong now that for a time the self-mist has rolled off my soul, so ready for war, as if a great war was coming which God by His revelation of Himself to me, and of myself to myself, has been preparing me to fight in quiet, humble, unselfish faith. Not that the old temptations will not come back, but the memory of the clearer vision in my spirit to-night will come too, and the power to endure patiently the wounds to vanity and self-assertion, to resist idleness, and to rejoice in the blessings of my home and Christ's service. May God keep me and mine for ever. Amen.[1]

¶ There was an element of morbidness in all the development of his sensitiveness. But it was a morbidness which had not grown upon him from without like a fungus on a tree, but which was the natural outcome of his constitution and temperament. It was born with him. He never could have been entirely free from it, unless he had been a soldier in constant warfare. It was increased by physical disease, till it threatened to become a tyrannous power. But here, where his greatest weakness lay, appeared his greatest strength. If he could not exactly say, "Most gladly, therefore, will I glory in mine infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me," yet those who have closely known his character can say for him that he turned his necessity to glorious gain. He transmuted the dross of his nature into gold by the alchemy of Christian effort. "He was the most inflexible person," says an intimate friend, "with all his almost morbid delicacy of feeling—an iron will, impossible to move when it was fixed by principle."[2]

## I.

### The Reassurance.

**"My grace is sufficient for thee."**

1. The collocation of "grace" and "strength" in the present text is characteristic of the New Testament, and very significant. There are many to whom "grace" is a holy word with no particular meaning; "the grace of God," or "the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ," is only a vague benignity, which may fairly enough be spoken of as a "smile." But grace, in the New Testament, is

[1] *Life of Edward Thring*, i. 218.

[2] Stopford A. Brooke, *Life and Letters of F. W. Robertson*, 163.

force: it is a heavenly strength bestowed on men for timely succour; it finds its opportunity in our extremity; when our weakness makes us incapable of doing anything, it gets full scope to work.

Is grace the same as love? Yes, at the heart of it, it is the same as love. When we get deep enough down to the heart of it, love and grace are indistinguishable. The difference is that love can travel anywhere, upwards, or on the levels of equality but grace can travel downwards only. A king can always be gracious to his subjects; a subject can never be gracious to his king. He may love his king, and be intensely loyal, but he can never be gracious to his king; for grace is love able to condescend to men of low estate, leaning down with royalty of pity to the lowly and wretched and lost. That is why we call it sovereign grace; it is a peculiar prerogative of sovereignty. That is why we talk of free grace. That is why, when we think of the grace of God, our thoughts go out immediately to Christ, for it is in Christ and Christ alone we learn the love of God to sinful men.

¶ Grace (in the Old Testament) means the immense honour—and sometimes even outward beauty—which God's goodness confers on a man. It refers to the unspeakable ennoblement of the whole of human nature by its contact with God. So it may come to mean as in Psalm xc.—the sort of "beauty" or "glory" (in the New Testament) which passes upon Christians from the presence of their Master, clothing them with radiance, winningness, and power.[1]

¶ Grace has been excellently defined as "God's love in action," or otherwise as a "gift of spiritual strength." Man's kindliness too often evaporates in feeling, or in a few sympathetic words. With God to will is to act, and so His goodwill must needs energize in bounty.[2]

As Thy Love is discovered almighty, almighty be proved
Thy power, that exists with and for it, of being Beloved!
He who did most, shall bear most; the strongest shall stand
the most weak.
'Tis the weakness in strength, that I cry for! my flesh, that
I seek
In the Godhead! I seek and I find it. O Saul, it shall be
A Face like my face that receives thee; a Man like to me,

[1] R. W. Barbour, *Thoughts*, 114. [2] W. Bright, *The Law of Faith*, 14.

Thou shalt love and be loved by, for ever: a Hand like this hand
Shall throw open the gates of new life, to thee! See the Christ stand![1]

(1) "*My* grace."—What grace is this? Note who it is that promises. It is Jesus who speaks; therefore it is mediatorial grace, the grace given to Jesus Christ as the covenant Head of His people, that is here intended. It is the Head, Christ, in whom all fulness dwells, speaking to one of the members of His mystical body, and saying, "The grace which God has given to Me without measure on behalf of all the members of My body is sufficient for thee as well as for the rest of them." The Lord has made over to Christ all that the whole company of His people can possibly want; even more than that, for "it pleased the Father that in him should all fulness dwell"; and "of his fulness have all we received, and grace for grace"; and from that fulness we hope continually to draw for evermore. This is the grace which is sufficient for us.

¶ A friend once told me that long ago, amidst the strong temptations of youth, he often found great deliverance given through the simple utterance of the words, "Jesus Christ." It was no incantation; it was a personal reliance, expressed as briefly, as urgently, as much in the concrete, as possible; but no incantation in legend or fable could act more wonderfully.[2]

(2) "My grace *is* sufficient."—The reply is not, "I *will* give thee grace sufficient," but "My grace" (which thou hast now) "*is* sufficient for thee." That grace is given and possessed by the sorrowing heart at the moment when it prays. Open your eyes to see what you have, and you will not ask for the load to be taken away. Is not that always true? Many a heart is carrying some heavy weight; perhaps some have an incurable sorrow; some are stricken by disease that they know can never be healed; some are aware that the shipwreck has been total, and that the sorrow which they carry to-day will lie down with them in the dust. Be it so! "My grace" (not "shall be," but) "*is* sufficient for thee." And what thou hast already in thy possession is enough for all that comes storming against thee of disease, disappointment, loss and misery. Set on the one side all possible as well as all actual

[1] Browning, *Saul.* [2] H. C. G. Moule, *Temptation and Escape*, 100.

weaknesses, burdens, pains, and set on the other these two words, "My grace," and all these dwindle into nothingness and disappear. If troubled Christian men would learn what they have, and would use what they already possess, they would less often beseech Him with vain petitions to take away their blessings which are the thorns in the flesh.

¶ "My grace is sufficient for thee." I have heard of a life in which that sentence was a great spiritual turning-point. In the midst of an agonizing prayer, "Let Thy grace be sufficient for me," the eyes of the overwhelmed Christian were casually raised towards a text upon the wall, where this sentence appeared. The word "is" stood out conspicuous in colour. And with the sight of it came, through the Spirit, the simple but Divine intuition that what was implored was possessed already. Reader, have you read that "is"? Does your experience this hour include faith that rests as well as seeks? If so, is it not a sacred, a blessed reality? If not so, why not? Here is the warrant, phrased in the present tense, and the words are your Master's, your Possessor's, words. Believe them now—that is to say, practically, act upon them now.

St. Paul did so. It is a delightful "therefore" with which he pursues his story. "Most gladly therefore"—therefore, because the Lord has said this, just for that reason—"will I glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me, may (literally) tabernacle upon me," as the Shechinah-cloud upon the camp of Israel. And further, "Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecution, for Christ's sake; for when I am weak, then am I strong."[1]

(3) "My grace is *sufficient*."—How modestly the Master speaks about what He gives! "Sufficient"? Is there not a margin? Is there not more than is wanted? The overplus is "exceeding abundant," not only "above what we ask or think," but far more than our need. "Two hundred pennyworth of bread is not *sufficient* that every one may take a little" says Sense. Omnipotence says, "Bring the few small loaves and fishes unto Me"; and Faith dispensed them among the crowd; and Experience "gathered up of the fragments that remained" more than there had been when the multiplication began. So the grace utilized increases; the gift grows as it is employed. "Unto him that hath shall be given." And the "sufficiency" is not a

[1] H. C. G. Moule, *All in Christ*, 64.

bare adequacy, just covering the extent of the need, with no overlapping margin; it is large beyond expectation, desire, or necessity; so leading onwards to high hopes, and a wider opening of the open mouths of our need that the blessing may pour in.[1]

(4) "For *thee*."—Not merely a general sufficiency is spoken of, when our Lord assures His suffering servant of His saving help; "sufficient for *thee*," He says. And it is only the assurance of a special adaptation of sympathy and succour to our individual needs that can suffice to allay our fears. In every one's case there is an individuality of character that makes the case peculiar; but the manifoldness of Christ's perfect character touches our specific necessity, and we know that He understands us, and that we have His sympathy. There is also a singularity of experience through which we have been called to pass; but He Himself has trodden the changeful path of life's pilgrimage; and "hath been in all points tempted like as we are," so that His own experience qualifies Him to understand the experience of His people, while His sovereign control of the vicissitudes of this world's history is the guarantee that He will adjust and adapt it to their good.

¶ It is a strange feature of the *Pilgrim's Progress* that Hopeful, generally so true to his name, is here so diffident. All sorts of questions arise, as to God's willingness to save, the limits within which the atonement operates, the mystery of election and so forth, just as they arose for Bunyan and are recorded in the long struggles of *Grace Abounding*. He receives the book, the same which makes Christian, from the first page of his narrative, distinctly "the man with a book." He prays the Father to reveal Christ to him, grasping here the double truth of revelation—Christ reveals the Father, and the Father reveals Christ. He goes so far as to cry with the boldness of simplicity: "Lord, take this opportunity, and magnify thy grace." Yet the battle swings to and fro for a long time, betwixt hope and despair. The silence of God baffles him, but he continues crying to God. "Oh friends!" says Bunyan in *Grace Abounding*, "cry to God to reveal Jesus Christ unto you; there is none that teacheth like Him." He continues, "for thought I with myself, If I leave off I die, and I can but die at the throne of grace." Again we are in *Grace Abounding*—"Yet, my case being desperate, I thought with myself

[1] A. Maclaren.

I can but die; and if it must be so it shall once be said, that 'such an one died at the foot of Christ in prayer.'"

But now we are to witness the full daybreak of light upon this tortured soul. He sees Christ at last, "with the eyes of his understanding." It is not a vision, or an access of emotion, or an ecstasy of any kind. It is a man's intellect applied to the promises of God. A flood of texts is poured upon him, but most of all these words, "My grace is sufficient for thee." Yet again *Grace Abounding* gives the key—"These words did with great power suddenly break in upon me: 'My grace is sufficient for thee, my grace is sufficient for thee, my grace is sufficient for thee,' three times together. And oh! methought that every word was a mighty word unto me; as 'my,' and 'grace,' and 'sufficient,' and 'for thee'; they were then, and sometimes are still, far bigger than others be."[1]

Though I am slow to trust Thee, Lord,
Slow to believe Thy gracious word,
Yet sweet Thy promise is to me,
"Sufficient is My grace for thee."

Though trials often here, and care,
This weary heart of mine must share,
How comforting Thy word to me,
"My grace sufficient is for thee."

Thus I can triumph in distress,
And find that even pain can bless,
Feeling how sure Thy word to me,
"Sufficient is My grace for thee."

Thy love I know, O Lord, can shed
Its beams o'er every path I tread,
Reviving me and teaching me,
"Sufficient is My grace for thee."

For *Thou* canst feel each grief *I* feel,
Canst sympathize, sustain, and heal,
And sweetly bring the truth to me,
"Thy grace sufficient is for me."

O Saviour! grace on me bestow,
Then though my tears may sometimes flow,
The precious truth my faith shall see,
"My grace sufficient is for thee."

[1] John Kelman, *The Road*, ii. 144.

And when I see Thee in the light
Thy matchless glory makes so bright,
Then shall I own, adoring Thee,
"Sufficient was Thy grace for me."[1]

2. Consider now when it is that we most need this reassurance.

(1) We need it *when we are awakened to a sense of sin.*—Sooner or later, if one believes in Christ, he is awakened to a sight of his own sin. It may be given him at his first approach to Christ, be the cause that leads him to the Saviour; or, being brought to Christ in gentler ways, it may visit him further on in his journey. Sometimes he is awakened in the heart by contact with a pure and holy life, sometimes it is by the preaching of the Word or by the singing of a simple hymn. Sometimes it is in the seasons of the night, when a man is alone with his conscience; sometimes it is by the reading of the Bible; or it is born of great sorrow falling, not upon us, but upon another; there is something in the suffering of our loved ones that makes us feel mysteriously guilty. It is in these ways, as in a hundred others, that the Spirit of God convicts us of our sin. We get a swift glimpse of what we are; see what we are for ourselves. Now there is no talk of reformation, we want something more radical than that; and for the first time we cry despairingly, "Lord, be merciful to me a sinner." Is it not in such an hour that this text reveals the richness of its meaning? It is then that we awaken to the Godhead of Christ: "My grace is sufficient for thee." Deeper than our deepest sinfulness is the grace of God in Jesus Christ; able to forgive and to redeem is the love that was revealed on Calvary.

(2) We need it *in suffering.*—It is a condition of our present life that no one ever is exempt from suffering. That is a stated part of the agreement on which we get our leasehold of the world. To one suffering is of his body, to another it may come in mind. One it may reach in his material fortunes; another through a brother or a son. In one case it may be swift and sharp, vanishing like a summer tempest, while in another it may be long and slow and may linger through the obscurity of years. There are many to whom God denies success, but to none He denies

[1] E. C.

suffering. Sooner or later, stealing from the shadow, it lays its piercing hand upon our hearts. Had it been otherwise, man would never have required a man of sorrows to suffer as He suffered who is our ideal. Now when we are called to suffer there is nothing more beautiful than quiet fortitude; to take it bravely and quietly and patiently is one of the noblest victories of life. There are few sights more morally inspiring than that of someone who has a cross to carry; someone of whom we know, perhaps, that every day must be a day of pain; yet we never hear a murmur from him, he is always bright. He is so busy thinking about others that he never seems to think about himself. We have all known people such as that; let us thank God that we have known them. There is no sermon so moving in its eloquence as the unuttered sermon of the cheerful sufferer. Among all the thoughts that God has given to make that victory possible to us there is none more powerful than this, "My grace is sufficient for thee."

¶ A friend of mine not long ago visited one of the hospitals in London. She was greatly touched by the look of happy peace on the face of one of the patients in a ward. A little while afterwards she asked a nurse who was the sorest sufferer in that ward, and the nurse, to her intense surprise, indicated the man she had first noticed. Going up to him, she spoke to him and told him what the nurse had said, and how she admired his courage when night and day in such pain. "Ah, miss," he said, "it is not courage, it is that," and he pointed to his bed-head, and there was a coloured text with *this* upon it. It was this that upheld him in the night; it was this that sustained him in the day.[1]

When thy lone dreams sweet visions see
And loving looks upon thee shine,
And loving lips speak joys to thee
That never, never may be thine;
Then press thy hand hard on thy side,
And force down all the swelling pain;
Trust me, the wound, however wide,
Shall close at last, and heal again.

Think not of what is from thee kept;
Think, rather, what thou hast received:
Thine eyes have smiled, if they have wept;
Thy heart has danced, if it has grieved.

[1] G. H. Morrison.

Rich comforts yet shall be thine own;
Yea, God Himself shall wipe thine eyes;
And still His love alike is shown
In what He gives, and what denies.[1]

(3) We need it *in temptation*.—Like suffering, temptation is universal, and like suffering it is infinitely varied. Probably in all the human family no two are ever tempted quite alike. It is true that temptations may be broadly classified, clustered, as it were, around common centres. There is one class that assails the flesh, another that makes its onset on the mind; yet every temptation is so adapted to the person tempted that perhaps in all the ages that have gone no one was ever tempted just like us. To us there is no argument so strong as this for the existence of the devil. There is such subtlety in our temptations that it is hard to conceive of it without a brain. We are tempted with incomparable cunning; temptation comes to us all so subtly and so surely that nothing can explain it but intelligence. Temptation is never obtrusive, but it is always there. It is beside us in the crowded street; it has no objection to the lonely moor; it follows us to the office and home; it dogs our footsteps when we go to church; it insists on sharing in our hours of leisure, and kneels beside us when we pray. There is not a relationship so sweet and sacred but temptation chooses it for its assault; there is not an act of sacrifice so pure but temptation meets us in the doing of it. It never despairs of us until we die. So tempted as we are, is there any hope for us at all against that shameless and malevolent intelligence? Yes. There is hope in unremitting watchfulness; there is hope in every breath of prayer. But above all there is hope in this: when we are tempted and are on the point of falling, we can lift up our hearts to Christ and hear Him say, "My grace is sufficient for thee." Was He not tempted in all points like as we are, and yet was He not victorious? Did He not conquer sin, lead it captive, and lay it vanquished at His feet for ever? And now we are His and He is ours; that victory which He has won is ours. It is at our disposal every hour.

¶ When we are made one with Christ, then His power is really made ours for the warfare against sin. When we abide in Him.

[1] H. S. Sutton.

we are really and in very deed kept by Him. At no point is there greater need of wise and cautious statement than here, for unguarded and exaggerated language may go very near the claiming of actual perfection. We shall see how Mr. Macgregor himself did not always quite escape this danger. Yet we are to understand broadly that such a promise as, for instance, "My grace is sufficient for thee" is not to be thinned down or emptied of its meaning. If we are one with Him, and His life is being manifested in us, then He is able to keep and His grace is sufficient. There is here not the smallest claim to perfection. That is in this life impossible, alike on the negative side of avoiding every transgression, and, still more manifestly, on the positive side of attaining full conformity to the Son of God. But without any thought of what is unattainable, it is certain that in the daily warfare the issue in innumerable cases would be very different if we could but remember, and act upon the remembrance, that Divine help is ever at hand for all God's children to claim, and that He means us to claim it, and to live in the joy and power which it brings.[1]

¶ The Book of the Spiritual Tabernacle is the longest work of the hermit, and contains a strange, naïve, and arbitrary interpretation of the symbols of the ark of the covenant, and of the sacrifices of the ancient law. Here is what he says with regard to the offering of the poor as commanded in the Jewish law:—

"And the doves shall keep near streams and beside clear waters, so that if any bird flies downwards to seize them or to do them any injury, they may recognize him by his reflection in the water and beware of him. The clear water is Holy Scripture, the lives of saints, and the mercy of God."

In the following passages he pictures, with the help of these same doves, the offering of Saint Paul:—

"And our Lord replied that His grace should be sufficient for him, for virtue is perfected in the weakness of temptations. When he understood this he offered these two doves into the hands of our Lord. For he renounced self, and willingly became poor, and bent the necks of his doves (that is, his desires) under the hands of our Lord Jesus Christ and of the Holy Church. And Christ broke the necks and the wings of the doves, and then he became incapable of desiring or of flying towards any desire except that which was God's will. And then Christ placed the head (that is to say, the will, which was dead and powerless) under the broken wings, and then the doves were ready to be consumed; and so the holy Apostle says: 'Most gladly, therefore, will I rather

[1] D. C. Macgregor, *George H. C. Macgregor*, 115.

glory in my weakness, that the power of Christ may rest upon me.'"[1]

(4) We need it *in the hour of death.*—Again, shall we not need this word when life is ending, when we come to die? There is no pillow for a dying head except the grace of God in Jesus Christ.

¶ When I was a young minister in Thurso, I was called into the country one beautiful summer day to the bedside of an elder who was dying. He was a godly man, grave and reverent, a man whose only study was the Bible, and who, summer and winter, was never absent from his familiar corner in the sanctuary. Now he was dying, and, as sometimes happens even with the choicest of the ripest saints, he was dying in such a fear of death as I have never witnessed from that hour. Outside the open window was the moor with a shimmer of summer heat upon it: far away there was the long roll of the heavy waves upon the shore; here in the cottage was a human soul that walked reverently and in the fear of God overmastered by the fear of death. Well, I was a young man then, very ignorant, very unversed in the deep things of the soul, and I tried to comfort him by speaking of the past—what an excellent elder he had been; and I shall never forget the look he gave me, or how he covered his face as if in shame, as he cried, "Not that, sir, not that! There is no comfort for me there." It was then I realized for the first time that the only pillow to die on is free grace. It was then I felt how all we have done is powerless to uphold us in the valley of death, for all our righteousness is as filthy rags, and brings no ease upon a dying bed. This is our only stay: "My grace is sufficient for thee."[2]

## II.

### The Reason for the Reassurance.

**"For my power is made perfect in weakness."**

1. From the Greek of this passage it is quite obvious that the words "power is made perfect in weakness"—there is no "my" in the original—are an axiom, or proverb, and that they are intended to convey a law of the spiritual life. They are intended to teach us that, at least in the spiritual province, and for all men as well as for St. Paul, there is a certain finishing and perfecting power in weakness. Not that we are to cherish our infirmities, to remain

[1] M. Maeterlinck, *Ruysbroeck and the Mystics*, 46. [2] G. H. Morrison.

children when we ought to be men, to continue weak when we may be strong. To be weak is to be miserable. It is not weakness that our Lord commends, but strength struggling against and striving through weakness. Weakness of itself will perfect nothing. But when strength and weakness are combined in the same nature, the weakness may prove a fine discipline for the strength; it may induce watchfulness, prayer, a humble dependence on God, a tender consideration for the weakness of our fellows. Perfect strength is apt to be very far from perfect. It is apt to be rude, self-sufficient, untender. But a strength which has to contend with weakness, to pierce through hindrances, to show itself through reluctant and imperfect organs, is likely to become a gracious and friendly strength. If it is good to have a giant's strength, but not to use it like a giant, then there is no discipline for strength like that of weakness.

¶ Now the sun is strong, and I get my strength for arm and limb from him: but for its strength my heart travels to God and to home; for he who is near Christ is near the hearth-fire.[1]

¶ You will allow if weakness was ever pardonable, it has been so in my case; not that I apologize for it—I love it, and I glory in it. If ever there lived a bold-hearted man, St. Paul was one, and he said, "I glory in my infirmities." Oh yes! there is a certain holy virtuous weakness, without which something would be lacking to the perfect harmony of man's nature.[2]

¶ It is not the weakness which we admire, but the strength which is exercised by weakness and triumphs over it; it is not the cloud, but the sun which shines through the cloud; it is not the veil, but the Divine beauty which shows through the veil; it is not the infirmities, but the grace which is able to subdue these very infirmities to its own quality and complexion.[3]

¶ What are *your* prison walls? Broken health, failing limbs, while you would choose to be all movement for God? Aching head, weary nerves, while it is your duty to be surrounded with toil and bustle? A sphere of service curiously unlike what you would have chosen, in view of your knowledge of your own capacities or weakness, yet in which you are to-day, and out of which your Lord does not—at least to-day—lead you? Home service, when you would prefer to be a missionary pioneer? A parish, when you would like to evangelize a province? A sick-

[1] R. W. Barbour, *Thoughts*, 115.
[2] Ernest Renan, in *Brother and Sister*, 295.
[3] S. Cox.

room to fill with patient service, when you would like to organize a hospital? Study, when you would like out-door preaching? Out-door preaching, when you would choose study? A life of entirely secular conditions, when you would choose the holy ministry? Limited abilities, difficulty of speech, when you would like to be able, eloquent, for Christ? Poverty, when your heart aches for riches, that you may spend for Him? Riches, when you would fain have done, for His sake, with their solemn responsibilities, and be free in the restful simplicity of humbler life? Surroundings marred by the mistakes and perhaps injustice of others, while you long for co-operation and intelligent, healthy sympathy?

You know, in all these things, what it is to "take pleasure." They are delightful, not in themselves, but from this point of view. The restraint, the negative, has become blessed to you, for it is your Lord's chosen opportunity for saying to you, "My grace is sufficient for thee." Your former fret and worry under circumstances are gone; for circumstances are literally as full as they can hold of occasions for the acceptance and working of His power. You would rather be weak, and the subject of His power, than be strong. You would rather be at uncongenial work, and have it filled with Him, than be at your most darling occupation, of your own mere will. In the mistakes, in the wrong-doings of man you yet see and welcome the unmistaking love and wisdom of your Lord. Your deep, calm, silent desire is that He should be glorified in you. And as this is, manifestly, very often best done "in your infirmities," you can, you do, in Him, take pleasure in them. For infirmities of every scale, for little as for great, for great as for little, by a blessed inclusion, His grace is sufficient.[1]

2. It is an application of general truth to the case in hand if we translate as in A.V. (with some MSS.): "*My* strength is made perfect in [thy] weakness." It is enough, the Lord tells Paul, that he has this heavenly strength unceasingly bestowed upon him; the weakness which he has found so hard to bear—that distressing malady which humbled him and took his vigour away—is but the foil to it: it serves to magnify it, and to set it off; with that Paul should be content.

3. "My strength is made perfect"—that is, of course, perfect in its manifestation or operations, for it is perfect in itself already. "My strength is made perfect in weakness." It works in and

[1] H. C. G. Moule, *All in Christ*, 66.

through man's weakness. God works with broken reeds. If a man imagines himself to be an iron pillar, God can do nothing with or by him. All the self-conceit and confidence have to be taken out of him first. He has to be brought low before the Father can use him for His purposes. The lowlands hold the water, and, if only the sluice is open, the gravitation of His grace does all the rest and carries the flood into the depths of the lowly heart.

¶ I fancy if we each had to single out some one person as exhibiting in his or her life the power of Divine Grace, we should not generally select those who stand highest in the world's esteem for intellect or power of will, but we should take one whose transparent simplicity and modesty seemed to allow the light of Christ to shine through him in all its purity, so that none could be in his company without feeling that they had been brought nearer to Christ Himself. These are the living witnesses of the unseen realities; one such humble Christian man or woman exercises a power for good of which they are themselves altogether unconscious, and which will be fully understood only in that day when God shall judge the secrets of men.[1]

4. Christ's strength loves to work in weakness, only the weakness must be conscious, and the conscious weakness must have passed into conscious dependence. There, then, you get the law for the Church, for the works of Christianity on the widest scale and in individual lives. Strength that counts itself strength is weakness: weakness that knows itself to be weakness is strength. The only true source of power, both for Christian work and in all other respects, is God Himself; and our strength is ours but by derivation from Him. And the only way to secure that derivation is through humble dependence—which we call faith—on Jesus Christ. And the only way by which that faith in Jesus Christ can ever be kindled in a man's soul is through the sense of his need and emptiness. So when we know ourselves weak, we have taken the first step to strength; just as, when we know ourselves sinners, we have taken the first step to righteousness. In all regions of life the recognition of the doleful fact of our human necessity is the beginning of the joyful confidence in the glad, triumphant fact of the Divine fulness. All our emptinesses

[1] J. B. Mayor, *The World's Desire*, 74.

are met with His fulness that fits into them. It only needs that a man should be aware of what he is, and then turn himself to Him who is all that he is not, and into his empty being will flow rejoicing the whole fulness of God.

¶ Many modern Englishmen talk of themselves as the sturdy descendants of their sturdy Puritan Fathers. As a fact, they would run away from a cow. If you asked one of their Puritan fathers, if you asked Bunyan, for instance, whether he was sturdy, he would have answered with tears, that he was as weak as water. And because of this he would have borne tortures.[1]

¶ If an electric car stands motionless on the tracks, it is nothing against the power of electricity. If an invalid has no appetite, and cannot go out of doors at night, it is no argument against things to eat and the joy of starlit air. If a man does not know a flower by name, or a poem by heart, it is no indictment of the beauty of a rose, or the charm of poetry. If we bear the name of Christ but give no other sign of Him, if we go through the forms of godliness, but live powerless lives, it is a thousand reproaches to us. To be powerless when Christ has all power, and we can have all we want, is an arrangement to which we can make no answer that is not self-incriminating.[2]

Thou knowest, Lord, that we alone
Should surely fail;
We have no wisdom of our own
That could prevail;
Yet Thou, through human helplessness,
Canst work Thy will—canst help and bless.

Take these weak hands, and hold them, Lord;
Our Helper be,
In Thee is all our fulness stored;
We come to Thee,
And know that, by Thy Spirit's might,
We must be victors in the fight.[3]

[1] G. K. Chesterton, *Heretics*.
[2] M. D. Babcock, *Thoughts for Every-Day Living*, 32.
[3] Edith H. Divall, *A Believer's Rest*, 54.

# The Apostolic Benediction.

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## The Apostolic Benediction.

**The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Ghost, be with you all.—2 Cor. xiii. 14.**

1. Such is the blessing with which the Apostle concludes his Second Epistle to the Church at Corinth. It is the longest and fullest of all the salutations which he was accustomed to use, each of which was by his own appointment to be the token that the letter in which it occurred came from him. This we have expressly stated to us in one of the earliest of the Epistles of St. Paul. It was the custom for the author to employ a clerk, or writing servant, who copied down the words as they were uttered, and who at times was permitted himself to send a message in the letter of his master. Such a servant was Tertius, who, in the sixteenth chapter of the Epistle to the Romans and the twenty-second verse, tells us that he wrote the letter: "I Tertius, who wrote this epistle, salute you in the Lord." But though St. Paul dictated his Epistles to secretaries, yet he always added the salutation with his own hand. Hear his own words as given in his earliest Epistle but one (the second to the Thessalonians): "The salutation of Paul with mine own hand, which is the token in every epistle: so I write." And upon examination of the thirteen Epistles to which the name of St. Paul is prefixed—as well as that to the Hebrews (which has in it many characteristic Pauline phrases)—we find that they all contain near their conclusion—with some slight verbal variations—the expression, "The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ be with you all." During St. Paul's lifetime this blessing appears to have been considered pre-eminently his. After his death we find it employed by St. John to conclude the Revelation—as the final salutation and blessing which the Holy Spirit inspired him to give to the Church of Christ through all ages.

2. St. Paul sets before us in these words the substance of God's salvation, as it may be enjoyed upon the earth by saved men. All salvation, as it is progressively experienced on this earth, is comprehended in the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Ghost. All this the Apostle solemnly sought of God for the Corinthian Church, and solemnly commended to their faith by way of benediction. He takes us to a greater rock than that of Horeb, and, touching it with his rod, calls on the water to pour itself out, not in one channel, but in a threefold course and with a threefold fulness. All heaven is in this wondrous blessing; all Godhead is here, with the infinite and everlasting stores of Father, Son, and Spirit.

¶ The Benediction of the New Covenant marks a great advance upon that of the Old. "And the Lord spake unto Moses, saying, Speak unto Aaron and unto his sons, saying, On this wise ye shall bless the children of Israel; ye shall say unto them, The Lord bless thee and keep thee: The Lord make his face to shine upon thee, and be gracious unto thee: The Lord lift up his countenance upon thee, and give thee peace. So shall they put my name upon the children of Israel; and I will bless them." In that Name put upon the children of Israel everything is omitted that makes the Name of God distinctively Christian. There is no mention of the Divine Fatherhood, the Divine Son, or the Divine Spirit. Neither is there any mention of the love of God, the grace of Christ, or the communion of the Holy Ghost. It conveys no sense of nearness, but gives the impression that God is remote, transcendental, and majestic, who graciously condescends to bless Israel His people. The Christian Benediction brings God near in the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Ghost.[1]

3. The Christian revelation comes to us through Jesus Christ. The communication of the truth concerning God is no longer confined to the prompting of men's minds, but is revealed in the Person of the Son of God. He came to reveal the Father, and declared that only He could reveal Him. At the close of His ministry He claimed to have accomplished His Mission. He said to Philip, "He that hath seen me hath seen the Father"; and to God He said, "I glorified thee on the earth, having accomplished the work which thou hast given me to do . . . I manifested thy

[1] S. Chadwick, *Humanity and God*, 337.

name . . . and I made known unto them thy name." That manifestation involves a Trinity of Persons in the one God. The word Trinity is not found in the Scriptures, nor is the doctrine of the Trinity formally stated. The Scriptures do not systematize doctrine; they furnish data and leave the work of systematizing to others. But the Trinity lies at the foundation of all New Testament teaching. Jesus claimed to be equal with God, and spoke of the Spirit as Personal and Divine, and yet there are not three Gods, but one. The Apostles everywhere proclaim this doctrine, and recognize the threefold distinction in the Persons of the one God. The equal Deity of the Son and Spirit with the Father is the mystery and the glory of the Gospel they preach.

¶ "The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Ghost, be with you all." In these words St. Paul has completely transcended the fundamental conception of his nation. He has given utterance to a thought which he never could have derived from any mythical imagination suggested by his Jewish nationality. The fundamental idea of Judaism, while it remained untouched by Gentile influences, was the unity of God; He was the self-existent, incommunicable Jehovah. It is true that, as Judaism came into contact with the Hellenic spirit, there began to appear a break in its rigid conception of the Divine unity; and the ideas of the "Word" and "Wisdom" of God came to stand for separate manifestations of the life of God. Men began to see distinctions in that essence which they had hitherto believed to be an inseparable unity. But even in its later stages, Judaism was true to itself. It never would have occurred to the Jewish mind that an individual man, who had lived an actual life in history, could be made partaker of the essential nature of the Deity. We may admit, though it is very questionable, that the Logos of Philo was a personal being, dwelling in the heart of the Divine life; but, however personal he may have been, he was not a man who had ever lived in history. Philo himself did not offer him to the world as an actual historical personage, but, at best, only as an ideal personality who had dwelt for ever behind the veil of history.

Here, however, is a conception of St. Paul which he evidently shares with the Christian community, and in which we see an essential revolt from Judaism in all its forms. It is not simply that the *unity* has become a *trinity*; that might be accounted for on principles of historical development. But the new point in relation to Judaism consists in this: one of the persons of the Trinity is a

man who had actually lived on earth, a son of Adam, a member of that Jewish race which had always emphasized the immeasurable nature of the distance which separates the creature from the Creator. Beside the great Jehovah whom Judaism had feared to name, and beside that Divine Spirit whose workings had been mysterious even to the prophets whom it inspired, St. Paul is not afraid to place the name of the historical Jesus; he is not even afraid to mention His name first of the three. We have grown so familiar with the rhythm of the formula that we are apt to forget the paradox it must have involved to every Jewish mind. Before the burning blaze of the Divine purity even the Lawgiver had been commanded to put the shoes from off his feet, and remember his unworthiness to stand on holy ground. Here is a man who five-and-twenty years before had been seen going in and out amongst his fellow-beings, sharing in their common toil, wearing their human frailty, walking their daily course of suffering and duty; yet this man, at the close of these five-and-twenty years, is spoken of by one of the leading Apostles of the primitive Church in the same breath with the eternal Jehovah and the life of the Divine Spirit; and spoken of in a way which shows the belief of that Apostle to have been an article of faith in the community amongst whom he laboured. The paradox is only another proof how boundless must have been the impression produced by the life of the Christian Founder, and how impossible it is to account for the construction of that life on any mythical principle of New Testament interpretation.[1]

4. In this threefold benediction the Apostle places the grace of Christ before the love of God. Why does he do this? The explanation is found in the fact that this is not a doxology, not primarily a confession of faith, but a benediction. A doxology is an ascription of praise; a benediction is a word of blessing. One ascends from the heart of man to God, the other descends from God to man. Consequently the benediction approaches the subject not from the standpoint of theology, but from that of experience. It is not concerned with definition, nor does it contemplate the glory of God in the absoluteness of His Deity, but it sets Him forth as He is realized in the soul. The process is in this order. We come to the knowledge of God through Jesus Christ, and the Spirit is the gift of both the Father and the Son. It is through the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ that we

[1] G. Matheson.

come to the knowledge of the love of God, and it is by grace and love that we enter into the life of communion with the Holy Ghost. No other order is possible. To sinful men there can be no love apart from grace, and fellowship is impossible without love. God is always revealed as He is involved in His relation to the world and the human race, and here He is revealed as He becomes known to the soul in the process of salvation through faith in His name.

¶ Which is first, the door or the house—first, that is, when we enter into the house? If God has a great mansion of love, He must provide a door to it, or we shall never get in. Now grace is the door into love. If God has a heart of love in the midst of all His immense activity, He must show it to our hearts, or else we should never be able to trust Him in the view of all His actions; and therefore though a "natural" man, which commonly means a rough, unthinking fellow, may have come without sense of his sins and wants, to talk a little of the love of God, in a poor way it is true, and might wish the love of God to be placed first; the spiritual man, as a thoughtful man, can see that grace must be placed first, because a special favour is in its effect upon our character like a door which admits us into the great common, permanent, public favour of God; he will see that, unless God reveal to us His heart in His intimate kindness to our own, we shall never be able to feel quiet confidence when we look forth into the immensity of His universe.[1]

5. The first Christians had a threefold experience of God, and they needed three Names to give it adequate expression. They knew that God had come to them in the perfect life of their Master; that Jesus Christ had lifted them up into a measure of the same consciousness of God as Father in which He Himself had always lived; and that God was reproducing His own life in their regenerate hearts. So they spoke of God as Son and Father and Holy Spirit. Nothing less would fully express what He had become to them.

What they used was the language of religion, and not the language of metaphysical speculation about the mystery of the Divine nature. They never attempted to define in accurate and systematic terms things that have abounding reality for the loving heart, the surrendered will, and the illumined eye, but which cannot be adequately presented to the logical intellect.

[1] T. T. Lynch, *Three Months' Ministry*, 319.

It was not the words they cared about, but the meaning that lay behind the words; and this meaning could, even by very imperfect speech, be conveyed to others who had been brought into the same experience as themselves. They could express the nature of God in terms of their own heart's experience and in no other; and speaking in terms of experience they could not do justice to that which God was for them with fewer than these three Names. All of them would have responded with full hearts to St. Paul's threefold benediction; "the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Ghost, be with you all."

¶ "The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the Love of God, and the Fellowship of the Holy Ghost, be with you." Now I do not know precisely what sense is attached in the English public mind to those expressions. But what I have to tell you positively is that the three things do actually exist, and can be known if you care to know them, and possessed if you care to possess them. First, by simply obeying the orders of the Founder of your religion, all grace, graciousness, or beauty and favour of gentle life, will be given to you in mind and body, in work and in rest. The Grace of Christ exists and can be had if you will. Secondly, as you know more and more of the created world, you will find that the true will of its Maker is that its creatures should be happy;—that He has made everything beautiful in its time and its place, and that it is chiefly by the fault of men, when they are allowed the liberty of thwarting His laws, that Creation groans or travails in pain. The Love of God exists, and you may see it, and live in it if you will. Lastly, a Spirit does actually exist which teaches the ant her path, the bird her building, and men, in an instinctive and marvellous way, whatever lovely arts and noble deeds are possible to them. Without it you can do no good thing. To the grief of it you can do many bad ones. In the possession of it is your peace and your power.[1]

## I.

### The Grace of the Lord Jesus Christ.

What is the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ? St. Paul said to the Corinthians that they knew it. "Ye know the grace of our

[1] Ruskin, *Lectures on Art*, § 125 (*Works*, xx. 115).

Lord Jesus Christ, that, though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, that ye through his poverty might become rich." The grace of Christ, that which was supreme in Him, which was His distinction and has made Him the type of perfect life, the example of salvation, to all mankind, was His complete devotion to the welfare of those with whom He came into contact. His grace was a devotion to the good of man which knew no thought for self, which counted no sacrifice too great to attain it, not even the death of the cross.

1. Grace, then, is first an attribute of God seen in Jesus Christ. "God commendeth his own love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." Redemption originated in that disposition of the Divine mind. It was by the grace of God that Jesus Christ tasted death for every man, and it is to the same grace that every man owes his salvation. It begins in grace, is continued in grace, and is perfected in grace. At no stage is it of works ; it is a gift of God, the outflowing of His grace.

¶ Dr. Pierson, when a young man, was never spoiled with an oversupply of spending money, for while his parents were thrifty they had a large family and his father was not in a position to supply all his boy's needs, much less his luxuries. He had, however, a wealthy uncle who one day asked Arthur if he was in need of money. When the young man candidly admitted that he was, the uncle took out a blank card and wrote an order to his cashier: "Give the bearer, Arthur T. Pierson, as much money as he wants and charge to my account. JOHN GRAY." The boy took his uncle at his word, drew as much money as he needed and repaid it to the cashier as soon as he was able. The uncle never asked how much he drew nor when he returned it. In commenting on this incident in later years Dr. Pierson said: "How like God's unbounded grace is the promise 'Ask what thou wilt.' How rich we are when God is our banker! It is not *our* name or account that makes our request honoured, but the name of Him who endorses it—'Whatsoever ye shall ask in my Name.'"[1]

2. But grace passes from an attribute of the Divine character to an active energy in the soul. At the throne of grace we "find grace to help us in time of need." The heart is "stablished by grace," and by grace "we may offer service well-pleasing to God."

[1] Delavan L. Pierson, *Arthur T. Pierson*, 87.

It is in "the grace that is in Christ Jesus" that we find our strength, and we are assured of its sufficiency for endurance as well as for service, "My grace is sufficient for thee." We are commanded to "grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ." These passages all speak of the Divine influence in the soul as the operation of grace, and regard that which has its source in the grace of God as the working power of salvation. Grace pardons the guilty, restores the fallen, delivers the captive, sanctifies the sinner, sustains and perfects the believer.

Lord, with what courage and delight
I doe each thing,
When Thy least breath sustaines my wing!
I shine and move
Like those above,
And with much gladnesse
Quitting sadnesse,
Make me faire days of every night.[1]

3. Finally, grace is always associated with our Lord Jesus Christ. For it comes to us only "by Jesus Christ," being manifested in His work for us and then in His treatment of us. Grace—seen in that unspeakable renunciation when He laid aside all that was to be prized, and esteemed it but as something to be surrendered for man's redemption. Grace—seen in His descent, in His life, in His teaching, and in His death. Grace—singing its sweetest strain in the words, "Him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out." Grace—abounding where sin abounded, and seen at its loveliest in His treatment of poor sinners. "By grace ye are saved." But not only does the Apostle pray that such experience of grace might be theirs and ours; there is deeper depth in his desire than that. These words make clear the fact that we may know not only the grace which came *by* Jesus Christ, but the very "grace of the Lord Jesus Christ." This is not only the grace which imputes His righteousness to us, so that we stand uncondemned before a holy God, but the grace which imparts His very life, so that we walk undefiled before an unholy world. The salvation of God is not merely human life carried up to the highest possible height of development; it is

[1] Henry Vaughan.

rather the Divine life carried down to the lowest possible level of condescension. For He Himself who is all grace dwells with him that is of a humble and contrite spirit. "May this wonderful grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, sufficient for every need, be with you," prays the Apostle, "and may it lead you into a knowledge of the love of God."

¶ It was at this convention at Indianapolis that he uttered those pithy sayings: "The law says, *Do*, grace says, *Done*; the law says, *Do and live*, grace says, *Live and do*; the Gospel says to the sinner, *Come*, it says to the Christian, *Go*." These sayings soon found an echo in every Association hall in the land. They could readily be expanded into volumes; and they formed a large part of the basis of what in after years was Mr. Moody's working theology.[1]

Had I the grace to win the grace
Of some old man in lore complete,
My face would worship at his face,
And I sit lowly at his feet.

Had I the grace to win the grace
Of childhood, loving, shy, apart,
The child should find a nearer place,
And teach me resting on my heart.

Had I the grace to win the grace
Of maiden living all above,
My soul would trample down the base,
That she might have a man to love.

A grace I had no grace to win
Knocks now at my half open door:
Ah, Lord of glory, come thou in!—
Thy grace divine is all, and more.[2]

## II.

### The Love of God.

1. However wide the scope of the grace of Christ, and however precious the blessings which it comprehends, the Apostle,

[1] W. R. Moody, *The Life of Dwight L. Moody*, 407.
[2] George MacDonald, *Organ Songs* (*Poetical Works*, i. 312).

as we see, does not rest in this alone, but proceeds from it to the love of God. And indeed this is, doctrinally and practically, the constant issue of the grace of Christ—it leads on to the love of the Father. There is an erroneous tendency in some men's minds to go no further in their thoughts of salvation than the person of Christ and the grace of Christ. All but this is to them vague and, one might say, almost unreal. But such views are not only defective, and dangerously so; they are also necessarily erroneous. Neither Christ's Person nor His grace can be understood aright unless He be viewed as sent by the Father, and as the way to the Father. Accordingly, in the text the Apostle immediately reaches out from the grace of Christ to the love of God.

¶ The first clause of the Lord's Prayer, of course rightly explained, gives us the ground of what is surely a mighty part of the Gospel—its "first and great commandment," namely, that we have a Father whom we *can* love, and are required to love, and to desire to be with Him in Heaven, wherever that may be. And to declare that we have such a loving Father, whose mercy is over *all* His works, and whose will and law is so lovely and lovable that it is sweeter than honey, and more precious than gold, to those who can "taste" and "see" that the Lord is Good—this, surely, is a most pleasant and glorious good message and *spell* to bring to men. Supposing this first article of the true Gospel agreed to, how would the blessing that closes the epistles of that Gospel become intelligible and living, instead of dark and dead: "The grace of Christ, and the *love* of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Ghost," the most *tender* word being that used of the Father![1]

2. The Apostle invokes the love, not of the Father but of God. He is contemplated in the completeness of His Being, and the Name is used which includes all relationships. The Christian revelation concerning Him is that He is Love. From everlasting to everlasting God is Love. Does not the fact of Eternal Love involve personal subjects and objects of love within the Godhead? Is it possible to conceive of love absolutely unrelated? It was Eternal Love that gave the gift of the Eternal Son. Love was behind grace, and grace made way for love. Christ brings us to the Father, and makes known to us the love of God. Love could not flow to us save through the grace of atonement; and the grace

[1] Ruskin, *The Lord's Prayer and the Church* (*Works*, xxxiv. 196).

of atonement could not flow to us save through the love of God. Realization of the love of God in the redeeming work of grace brings the conscious experience of the love of God to the soul. The love of God is shed abroad in the heart through the Holy Ghost. The general love of God for the world becomes through faith a personal and conscious possession. The barriers of the soul disappear, all sense of distance and alienation is lost, every shrinking fear and haunting dread is cast out, and the heart finds its rest and home in God.

¶ Susanna Wesley, this mother of nineteen children—who had to be their teacher and almost their bread-winner, as well as their mother—yet resolutely spent one hour every morning and another every evening in prayer and meditation. In addition she generally stole another hour at noon for wholesome privacy, and was in the habit of writing down at such times her thoughts on great subjects. Many of these are still preserved, marked "Morning," "Noon," or "Evening"; and they have a certain loftiness of tone, a detachment from secular interests nothing less than amazing. Airs from other worlds seem to stir in them. Here is one example:—

"*Evening.*—If to esteem and to have the highest reverence for Thee; if constantly and sincerely to acknowledge Thee, the supreme, the only desirable good, be to love Thee, I do love Thee. If comparatively to despise and undervalue all the world contains, which is esteemed great, or fair, or good; if earnestly and constantly to desire Thee, Thy favour, Thy acceptance, Thyself, rather than any or all things Thou hast created, be to love Thee, I do love Thee! . . . If to rejoice in Thy essential majesty and glory; if to feel a vital joy o'erspread and cheer the heart at each perception of Thy blessedness, at every thought that Thou art God; that all things are in Thy power; that there is none superior or equal to Thee, be to love Thee, I do love Thee!"[1]

My eyes for beauty pine,
My soul for Goddës grace:
No other care nor hope is mine,
To heaven I turn my face.

One splendour thence is shed
From all the stars above:
'Tis named when God's name is said,
'Tis Love, 'tis heavenly Love.

[1] W. H. Fitchett, *Wesley and his Century*, 57.

And every gentle heart,
That burns with true desire,
Is lit from eyes that mirror part
Of that celestial fire.[1]

¶ When I was in India, mine was the terrible experience of living through a famine. I do not know what the loss of life was in that famine, but I daresay a million human beings died directly or indirectly of hunger. If I take the deaths which were consequent upon it directly or indirectly, and not in British India only but in native states, it will not, I think, be an exaggeration to assert that the famine cost India a million of human lives. What is the thought which such a visitation suggests to a Christian? Is it not this? How can God, if He be All-loving, as He is, and All-powerful, suffer His children in such multitude to perish of hunger? But a Mohammedan will not, I think, entertain that cruel doubt. To him the famine appears solely as an imperious reason for bowing his head before the throne of God. And why? Because his God is a God of power and not of love; He is like some gigantic shadow of an earthly Sultan; and His power becomes only more awful and more admirable, when it asserts itself in vengeance against human sin. No Mohammedan would be staggered in his faith by such a calamity as the earthquake of Lisbon or the volcanic eruption in the island of Martinique. For the God of Islam is a God of power; but the God of Christianity is a God of love.[2]

3. How then is God's love made known?

(1) There is first of all the love we have spoken of already, the love that gave Jesus. Even that is the outcome and expression of another love, electing love. And then there is the love that draws the soul to Jesus Christ. All these are manifestations of the Father's love, but it is not to these that the text alludes. These also are past and gone, they are historical. The Corinthians had already the love, and the knowledge and memory of it drew them one by one to Christ.

(2) Something more, therefore, must be meant when it is said "The love of God be with you." What is it? There is no better explanation than that given by the Master Himself, speaking to His disciples. It is given in St. John's Gospel. He says: "Henceforth I call you not servants; for the servant knoweth not what

[1] Robert Bridges. [2] Bishop Welldon, *The School of Faith*, 57.

his lord doeth; but I have called you friends." You know the distinction between the servant and the friend: the servant is one thing and the master another. The servant is not taken into the master's confidence as the friend is supposed to be. The servant does not stand upon the same level as the master; the servant is supposed to be doing his work for his wages. "Now," says Christ, "that is not your relation to Me; I call you friends, I put you in a sense on a level with Myself; I give you My confidence; we stand or fall together, and you are not bound to Me simply by the prospect of the wages you will get. I love you and you love Me back again, and because you love Me you will keep My commandments; if you keep My commandments I will love you, and My Father will love you." That is a love of complacency, a love of delight and confidence.

¶ Two or three years ago it was my duty to go to an elder of the church I serve, a most godly and faithful aged servant. An operation upon his eyes had been necessary, and the surgeon who performed it said to him: "I want you to remember this: until these wounds are healed do not get into circumstances where a tear would be likely to come; it would spoil all my work." A few days after a telegram came to me: "Kindly break the news to Mr. Walker that his son James is dead." It was a hard task under the circumstances, but I never saw grace come out more beautifully. He said: "No one can judge what a great loss this is to me. James was not only my son, but he had become my friend. I talked with him about everything; he managed things for me; I had the fullest confidence in him. I have not merely lost a child; I have lost my best earthly friend." And to the credit of God's grace I want to say that he did speak these words, and the tears were kept away.[1]

## III.

### The Communion of the Holy Ghost.

Grace leads to love, and love opens the way to communion. As grace is through Jesus Christ and love is of God, so communion is with the Holy Ghost. The Spirit is the gift of both the Father and the Son, and is Himself the Giver of each. "No man can say, Jesus is Lord, but in the Holy Spirit"; and if "the love of

[1] John Hall.

God hath been shed abroad in our hearts," it is "through the Holy Ghost which was given unto us." The Spirit is always revealed as the immediate Agent in the communication of God to the soul. It is He who convicts and converts, assures and inspires, equips and strengthens. In the Christian kingdom He is the Paraclete, who abides with us for ever. His abiding presence in the soul is the result of accepted grace and realized love. The end of redemption is realized in conscious communion with God through the Holy Ghost.

¶ It was St. Paul's invariable habit to take the pen from his amanuensis at the close and write a parting salutation as his sign-manual. This was always a prayer that "grace" might be with his readers; the word was characteristic of his teaching, and it always occurs, even in the briefest form of the closing salutation To understand the enlarged form of this salutation in 2 Corinthians we must recall the circumstances of the Corinthian Church. Party divisions were distracting it: all its manifold troubles St. Paul traces to this root. Unity must be restored: this is the first injunction of the first epistle (1 Cor. i. 10), and the last injunction of the second (2 Cor. xiii. 11). His remedy for disunion was his doctrine of the One Body, which he brought to bear on their sin of fornication, their difficulty about idol-meats, their jealousy as to spiritual gifts, their profanation of the Lord's Supper. The second epistle opens with an outburst of relief at their return to obedience. Yet at the close he shows that his fears are still alive. What will he find when he comes? "Strife, jealousy, wraths, factions, backbitings, whisperings, swellings, tumults?" If so, he warns them that he will not spare. He closes with exhortations to unity and peace, and promises the presence of "the God of love and peace." Then his final salutation runs at first in its accustomed form, "the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ"; but it is expanded to meet the occasion and its needs; "the God of love" suggests the addition "the love of God," and the true sense of membership which the One Spirit gives to the One body is prayed for in the words "the fellowship of the Holy Spirit." It is clear, then, that the genitive here is subjective and not objective; and this is confirmed by the parallel clauses. "The grace" which is "of the Lord Jesus," and "the love" which is "of God," are parallel with "the fellowship" which is "of the Holy Spirit." The meaning in this place seems to decide the otherwise doubtful sense of Phil. ii. 1, "if there be any fellowship of the Spirit." Here, again, the context speaks of love and unity. So that it is most natural to interpret the phrase in both places of the sense of

unity, membership or fellowship, which it is the peculiar work of the Holy Spirit to preserve in the Christian Church.[1]

1. What is Communion? It is partnership, the having something in common with another. It may be chiefly an outward thing, the sharing of a common business, or a common position, or a common home. But it may be chiefly an inward thing, the sharing of common tastes and sympathies, common joys and sorrows, common aims and aspirations, common feelings and hopes of any kind. In both cases there is the idea of a perfect oneness between two, so that what the one has the other has; what the one is the other is; what the one feels the other feels. It is not one giving and the other receiving; it is both giving and both receiving. It is not one speaking and the other listening; it is both speaking and both listening. It is not one loving and the other loved; it is both equally loving and both equally beloved. It is standing face to face, walking hand in hand, feeling that heart answers heart, seeing eye to eye.

One of the deepest facts of human life is man's perpetual need of intercourse and fellowship. A life of solitude is never satisfactory to a truly healthy man. He needs some fellowship. And for his whole satisfaction he needs various fellowship—with those above him, on whom he depends; with those beside him, who are his equals; and with those below him, whom he helps. All three of these relationships furnish the life of a completely furnished man. And the essence of all these fellowships is something internal; it is not external. It is in spirit and sympathy, not in outward occupations. It is communion and not merely contact. This goes so far that where communion is perfect, where men are in real sympathy with one another, contact or outward intercourse may sometimes be absent.

¶ Only goodness can see goodness, only spiritual minds can read spiritual, only faith can detect faith. Barnabas saw himself mirrored in Saul: only—and this is the sign and sacrament of friendship—it was himself with "self" lost sight of. So long as we fear another, or so long as we look askance on him, we can have no communion with him. That only comes to friendliness, to love.[2]

[1] J. Armitage Robinson, in Hastings' *Dictionary of the Bible*, i. 460,
[2] R. W. Barbour, *Thoughts*, 41.

2. In partaking, then, of the Communion of the Holy Ghost, we share a common life bestowed upon us by the supreme Giver; we have fellowship one with another in love, and truly our fellowship is with the Father and the Son in their mutual love God, through Christ, breathes into us His Spirit; this we receive, not alone, but conjointly one with another. God, through Christ, begins by imparting to our heart faith in His grace, and hope through His grace in all His goodness: and knowing and hoping in that, we abide in His love; together keep ourselves by the "communion of the spirit" in the love of God.

3. To those who seek so to walk there comes a constant fresh revelation of self, for the light is ever becoming brighter, and the clearer light of to-day shows up the small spots which yesterday were not discernible. Thus the communion of the Spirit leads inevitably to an increased self-loathing and distrust, and a more emphatic meaning each day in the testimony "that in me dwelleth no good thing." But not only does the clearer light bring clearer self-knowledge. While it shows the sin, it also shines upon the blood, and in this blessed life of communion the light is not more powerful to reveal sin than the Blood is to cleanse it. Hence we must lay this fact to heart, that "the communion of the Spirit" is maintained only by our continual appropriation of the cleansing power of the precious blood. If we would walk with God, it must be in white raiment cleansed and kept clean by the Blood of the Lamb.

¶ We cannot escape the dangers which abound in life, without the actual and continual help of God; let us then pray to Him for it continually. How can we pray to Him, without being with Him? How can we be with Him, but in thinking of Him often? And how can we have Him often in our thoughts, unless by a holy habit of thought which we should form? You will tell me that I am always saying the same thing: it is true, for this is the best and easiest method that I know: and as I use no other, I advise the whole world to it. We must *know* before we can *love*. In order to *know* God, we must often *think* of Him; and when we come to *love* Him we shall *also think* of Him often, for our heart will be with our treasure! Ponder over this often, ponder it well.[1]

[1] Brother Lawrence, *The Practice of the Presence of God*, 57.

4. Moreover, the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ cannot be hid. The fellowship of the Divine Spirit is a sharing in His Divine activity, in an unresting and untiring life, always moving, because motion and not rest is the essence of His nature—always moving with a blessing.

¶ Is it not a great thing to know that God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Ghost cry to us for help from Heaven as they look down upon the masses in London? "Whom shall We send, and who will go for Us?" And then the great cry of humanity is: "Whom wilt Thou send, and who will come to us?" It is an awful thing to think that the Holy Trinity have bound themselves—at any rate, they have planned; God forbid I should say that God limits Himself to anything—to work through men's ministry and through women's ministry, on other men, women and children—that He uses in other words, human ministry in His work. And therefore to-day, among these thousands of people, if you listen, you hear the great cry come from the heart of the Godhead: "Whom shall We send, and who will go for Us?" And we are bound, if we believe in it, to answer in our little way· "Here am I; send me." We cannot help it when we believe in it.[1]

East the forefront of habitations holy
Gleamed to Engedi, shone to Eneglaim:
Softly thereout and from thereunder slowly
Wandered the waters, and delayed, and came.

Then the great stream, which having seen he showeth,
Hid from the wise but manifest to him,
Flowed and arose, as when Euphrates floweth,
Rose from the ankles till a man might swim.

Even with so soft a surge and an increasing,
Drunk of the sand and thwarted of the clod,
Stilled and astir and checked and never-ceasing
Spreadeth the great wave of the grace of God;

Bears to the marishes and bitter places
Healing for hurt and for their poisons balm,
Isle after isle in infinite embraces
Floods and enfolds and fringes with the palm.[2]

[1] A. F. W. Ingram, *The Love of the Trinity*, 54.
[2] F. W. H. Myers, *Saint Paul.*

¶ I often think I see as it were, the Lord, sitting up in Heaven, looking on our sanctuaries with their mock performances and sham religion, saying, "Where are the tithes?" The people pray, in some sort of way I suppose, for God to pour out His Spirit and save men; and yet I think I can see the Lord Jesus almost weeping over them, and in an agony saying, "Why do you cry to Me to do what you ought to be doing yourself? Why don't you arise and do as I have told you? Why don't you send the gospel to every creature?" What the Lord wants is that you shall go about the business to which He sets you, not asking for an easy post, nor grumbling at a hard one. Not saying, "Lord, I never engaged to do this." Like the servant we sometimes get into our houses, all goes smoothly till the child gets the whooping-cough or the measles, then she comes to you and says, "I didn't bargain for this." She is not a servant for sickness. She is only a servant for fine weather. Are there not multitudes who act just the same towards the Lord Jesus? All goes smoothly till persecution arises, then they say, "Lord, this is too much." They say, "good-bye," or, if they don't say good-bye, they pocket their profession, and betray Him in their hearts. The Lord is tired of this mockery, this farce, and He says, "I will provoke you to jealousy by a people who are not a people, and will anger you with a foolish nation, seeing that you will not be My servants in truth, and that the great mass of you will not follow Me in holiness; I will raise up a people from the gutters and slums, gin-palaces and public-houses. I will make a people for Myself, who will follow Me all lengths." I want you to determine to be such a servant as this.[1]

## IV.

### Be With You All.

1. In what sense and to what end may the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Ghost be said to be with us? It cannot mean less than a conscious personal Presence. The invocation cannot seek grace, love, and communion as gifts apart from the Persons, in whom alone they are to be found. Neither grace, love, nor communion can have any reality apart from personality. We cannot give love and withhold ourselves; there cannot be communion without mutual

[1] *The Life of Catherine Booth*, ii. 417.

exchange. The prayer cannot be for anything less than for the conscious presence of God in the soul. Jesus teaches that the Father, Son, and Spirit are all equally present in the soul of the believer. Speaking of the Spirit He says, "He abideth with you, and shall be in you"; of Himself and the Father He saith, "If a man love me, he will keep my word: and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him." The Personality is neither lost nor confused. They come distinctly as Father, Son, and Spirit, but One Lord. Jesus dwells in man the source of all grace, God abides in him the spring and perfection of all love, and the Holy Spirit communes with him and energizes for all the will of God. Man is indwelt of the Triune God and dwells in Him. So, when we speak of the grace being *with* any, in the sense of the text, we mean that they are so the objects of it that it is continually working its effects in their person and history, and that the sense and assurance of it abides in their hearts.

¶ The smile which ever beams from the face of Christ, the eternal love which fills the heart of God, and the Holy Spirit who fills the hearts of the children of God with consciousness of His eternal love, are to be our companions along the pilgrimage of life. And, if so, the sunshine of Christ's smile, the unchanging love of God, and the guidance and strengthening of the Holy Spirit, will make our path, be it ever so rough, a path of peace and joy.[1]

2. And the great glory of this benediction is its unrestricted comprehensiveness—grace, love, fellowship "be with you *all*." For this assures our hearts in spite of past failure and shame, in spite of broken ideals and unfulfilled vows. No sin-created disability can stand before the victorious flow of God's grace and love, and the one who has failed hitherto may yet realize the promise. Just as through the smallest and feeblest members of our bodies there flows the same life which animates the brain, so the life of our great Head flows through all His members. And we may well take heart afresh to appropriate anew this triad of blessings which is possible of realization by us all.

It is a broad and blessed prayer. It comes to any. It reaches all. It knows no limitation or barrier. It needs no title or merit

[1] J. A. Beet, *A Commentary on St. Paul's Epistles to the Corinthians*, 479.

or worth on the part of those it would benefit and bless. That glorious, shining sun in the heavens flings its splendour lavishly and freely away on every side. It is as welcome to a beggar as to a king. A miserable wretch may shiver in rags, and his fellows may grudge him the very ground he stands on, or the grave he shall soon lie down in; but he has only to lift his head and look upward, that he may have lighting on him the glory of God's shining sun, as if it were all his own, and none had any right to share with him its benignity and blessedness. Even so, a sinner —any sinner in all this weary world—with nothing but his sin and misery and awful need—may come, and welcome, to the grace and love and fellowship so sweetly and generously prayed for here.[1]

¶ The "favour," the "benediction" of Christ, with which the Apostle always parts from his readers is, he now finally assures them, the nearest approach of God to man, the nearest approach of man to God. It is no less, on the one hand, than the expression of the Creator's affection for His creatures; it is no less, on the other hand, than the union of the hearts and spirits of men with the Heart and Spirit of God. And this blessing he invokes, not on a few individuals, or on any one section of the Corinthian Church, but expressly on every portion and every individual of those with whom, throughout these two Epistles, he had so earnestly and so variously argued and contended. As in the First, so in the Second Epistle, but still more emphatically, as being here his very last words, his prayer was, that this happiness might be with them *all*."[2]

[1] John Morgan, *The Ministry of the Holy Ghost*, 321.
[2] A. P. Stanley, *The Epistles of St. Paul to the Corinthians*, 583.

# The Inner Revelation.

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## The Inner Revelation.

**It was the good pleasure of God, who separated me, even from my mother's womb, and called me through his grace, to reveal his Son in me, that I might preach him among the Gentiles.—Gal. i. 15, 16.**

It would not be easy to overestimate the service which has been rendered to the cause of true religion by such narratives as that which Bunyan has given of his own conversion in his *Grace Abounding to the Chief of Sinners*, or the similar narrative which Scott, the commentator, gives of his religious history in *The Force of Truth*. This text in Galatians is just such a narrative. It is St. Paul's account of his own conversion—the secret history, as we may call it, of that ever-memorable event. It is perhaps the shortest and most compact piece of religious autobiography that was ever penned. And one need hardly say that, in this case, the story may be read without any misgiving respecting either the truth of the facts or the wisdom of the narrator.

St. Paul is vindicating the Divine origin and authority of his apostleship against those who had questioned his title to occupy an apostle's place. He claims that the words he speaks were given to him by the direct communication of Heaven, without the interposition of any human or intermediate agency: he bases his right to have his spiritual authority recognized upon the intimacy of the relationship in which God has met him; and he recalls, by way of substantiating his claims to apostolic status, the circumstances which had made his conversion and his call entirely exceptional and unique. No earthly voices of counsel or instruction, he says, had intruded themselves upon him; no earthly presences were at hand when his new Christian allegiance began to determine his course and shape his inward life. Flesh and blood had revealed nothing to him; even they who possessed experience in these things—they who were Apostles before him—had no share in the moulding of his destinies; but he had

retired into the Arabian desert, and had listened there, in the silences and solitudes, to the heavenly voices that had told him what God would have him to do. "Who shall dare," he seems to ask, "to question the validity of such an ordination as that—an ordination wherein no hands of men, but the invisible touch of God, consecrated me, and wherein the anointing and sanctifying influence was the breath of the Eternal Spirit?" In secret God had spoken to him. It was as he had stood in God's unveiled presence that his spiritual inspirations had come.

How have I seen in Araby Orion,
Seen without seeing, till he set again,
Known the night-noise and thunder of the lion,
Silence and sounds of the prodigious plain!

How have I knelt with arms of my aspiring
Lifted all night in irresponsive air,
Dazed and amazed with overmuch desiring,
Blank with the utter agony of prayer!

Shame on the flame so dying to an ember!
Shame on the reed so lightly overset!
Yes, I have seen Him, can I not remember?
Yes, I have known Him, and shall Paul forget?[1]

## I.

### A Destiny.

**"It was the good pleasure of God, who separated me, even from my mother's womb."**

This may be viewed as the utterance of adoring humility on the part of the Apostle, combined, however, with the strongest possible assertion of the Divine origin of his mission. A similar statement of God's arbitrary selection of a particular human being for a particular function is found in Isa. xlix. 1, "The Lord hath called me from the womb; from the bowels of my mother hath he made mention of my name"; v. 5, "That formed me from the womb to be his servant"; and again, with yet more striking resemblance, in Jer. i. 5, "Before I formed thee in the belly I

[1] F. W. H. Myers, *Saint Paul.*

knew thee; and before thou camest forth out of the womb I sanctified thee, and I ordained thee a prophet unto the nations." It is difficult to believe that this conviction of the Apostle concerning himself as the object of God's predestinating purpose, and perhaps even the form of its expression—for compare the words in the next verse, "that I might preach him among the Gentiles" —was derived mainly from Jeremiah. The Apostle feels that all the while that he had been pursuing that career of persecuting impiety and passionate Pharisaism, the Almighty had kept His eye upon him as His predestined Apostle, and had been waiting for the fitting hour to summon him forth to His work.

¶ Mr. Gladstone's character, as Lord Morley's biography brings out well, was in one respect exceedingly simple. His life became immensely powerful and influential; but it all flowed from one source—the moral crisis, almost in the form of a religious "awakening" or "conversion," through which he passed in his Oxford days. For immediately upon this there followed the consecration of his whole life as the life of a layman, and yet to be lived from the highest motives. His opinions, religious and political, changed afterwards from time to time. In religion, from Evangelical and individualistic, they became more High Church and historical. In politics, from Conservative they became avowedly Liberal. But while such subsequent revolutions changed the direction, they do not seem to me to have added to the amount of the force which at that date began to move. Up to the age of twenty-two, Gladstone was like a hundred other lads around him. From that age till he died at eighty-nine he lived in the lavish expenditure of power generated in him by one year —perhaps one hour—of conviction. But that force was a moral force; and for seventy years thereafter it poured itself with amazing volume into each new channel of opportunity which seemed to him a path of duty—much as if his chief guide in life had been the ancient indiscriminating exhortation, "Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might."[1]

1. So nicely balanced, and so carefully hung, are the worlds that even the grains of their dust are counted, and their places adjusted to a correspondent nicety. There is nothing included in the gross, or total sum, that could be dispensed with. The same is true in regard to forces that are apparently irregular. Every particle of air is moved by laws of as great precision as the laws

[1] A. Taylor Innes, *Chapters of Reminiscence*, 172.

of the heavenly bodies, or indeed by the same laws; keeping its appointed place, and serving its appointed use. Every odour exhales in the nicest conformity with its appointed place and law. Even the viewless and mysterious heat, stealing through the dark centres and impenetrable depths of the worlds, obeys its uses with unfaltering exactness, dissolving never so much as an atom that was not to be dissolved. What now shall we say of man, appearing, as it were, in the centre of this great circle of uses? They are all adjusted for him: has he, then, no ends appointed for himself? Noblest of all creatures, and closest to God, as he certainly is, are we to say that his Creator has no definite thoughts concerning him, no place prepared for him to fill, no use for him to serve, which is the reason of his existence?

God has a plan for all our lives. There is a definite and proper end, or issue, for every man's existence; an end which, to the heart of God, is the good intended for him, or for which he was intended; that which he is privileged to become, called to become, ought to become; that which God will assist him to become, and which he cannot miss, save by his own fault. Every human soul has a complete and perfect plan cherished for it in the heart of God—a Divine biography marked out, which it enters into life to live. This life, rightly unfolded, will be a complete and beautiful whole, an experience led on by God and unfolded by His secret nurture, as the trees and the flowers by the secret nurture of the world; a drama cast in the mould of a perfect art, with no part wanting; a Divine study for the man himself, and for others; a study that shall for ever unfold, in wondrous beauty, the love and faithfulness of God; great in its conception, great in the Divine skill by which it is shaped; above all, great in the momentous and glorious issues it prepares.

¶ The world is not a mere necessary sequence of material phenomena, but a spiritual stream that, swift or sluggish be its course, flows irresistibly to God. The existing fact is not the law; choice between good and evil, heroism, sacrifice are not illusions; conscience, the intuition of the ideal, the power of will, and moral force are ultimate and mastering spiritual facts. The Divine design controls it all, and man has liberty to help God's plan. And he who knows this, knows that "a supreme power guards the road, by which believers journey towards their goal," and he will be "bold with God through God." The crusaders' cry, "God

wills it," is for him, and his are the courage and consistency and power of sacrifice that come to those who know they battle on the side of God.[1]

¶ When a farmer goes into town on a market-day to hire, let us suppose, a ploughman into his service, it may happen that the man he hires is one who was previously quite unknown to him, and whom he had no thought of engaging till he chanced to meet him in the street. In these matters we are obliged to do the best we can in a rough haphazard way, with very little of fore-ordination. But it is never so with the Great Husbandman. When He comes into the market-place and hires labourers into His service, He never hires a man with whom He had no previous acquaintance; He never makes an unpremeditated choice. The man who is hired may not have known Christ before, but Christ has known him; and not only known him, but had His eye upon him, ever since he had a being; and has been all along preparing him for the place intended for him in the service. Christ, in everything He does, and especially in calling men into His grace and service, acts by determinate counsel and foreknowledge.[2]

2. How did St. Paul know that, before he was born, God had destined him to be an Apostle? Did Ananias tell him that he was "a chosen vessel unto God"? There are more ways than one by which God's purposes may come to light. As St. Paul looked back upon his life he could see that the Divine purpose had been controlling his personal history from the very beginning, and preparing him for a service of which he had no thought, and which, if it had been proposed to him, he would have regarded with horror. His birth, by which he inherited the rights of Roman citizenship, though he was also "of the stock of Benjamin, a Hebrew of the Hebrews"; his early years in Tarsus, a great Greek city, famous for its wealth, its commerce, and its schools of learning and philosophy; his life as a student in Jerusalem; his zeal in mastering the doctrines and methods of the Rabbis; the earnestness and fidelity with which he had submitted to the discipline of the most austere of Jewish sects, so that "touching the righteousness which is in the law" he was "blameless"—all these had contributed in various ways to his fitness for the work to which God had destined him.

[1] Bolton King, *Mazzini*, 240. [2] W. Binnie.

¶ All the good impressions I ever received came through reading. When I was about nine, some one gave me a copy of Baxter's *Call*, which I read through with great interest and earnestness; then Alleine's *Alarm*. Then I got hold of a copy of Doddridge's *Rise and Progress*, and not only read it through, but prayed all its prayers upon my knees. Then, when I was about ten, Squire Brooke came to the village, and a number of lads, myself amongst them, went like a flock of sheep into the vestry. The others were soon made happy, but I went mourning for some days. One night during a noisy prayer-meeting a big lad told me it was my duty to stand up and say I was saved. I did as I was told, but it was not true. I went to "class," prayed in prayer-meetings, but it was weary bondage until, in my seventeenth year, I ran away from it all. I think it was on that account more than any other that I buried myself out of the sight and hearing of every one who knew me with the intention that it should be for life. When I was in my twenty-first year I dreamt that I had to die in a fortnight. The news did not give me any fear, but I said, "What a fool I have been! Here is the end of my life, and I have not even begun to serve the purpose for which God gave it me." Six weeks afterwards I suddenly remembered this dream with all I thought and felt, the result being that on the spot I resolved to be a Christian.[1]

O blessed Paul elect to grace,
  Arise and wash away thy sin,
Anoint thy head and wash thy face,
  Thy gracious course begin.
To start thee on thy outrunning race
Christ shows the splendour of His Face:
What will that Face of splendour be
When at the goal He welcomes thee?[2]

## II.

### A Call.

**"And called me through his grace."**

In the Acts of the Apostles the external details of the call of St. Paul are described; here he gives us only the internal experi-

[1] *John Brash: Memorials and Correspondence*, 23.
[2] Christina G. Rossetti, *Verses*, 83.

ence. He alone could give this, and this was the really important thing. The flashing light, the arrested journey, the audible voice, the blindness, were all accessories. The one important thing was the inward voice that brought conviction to the heart of the man. Every Apostle needed a call from Christ to constitute him such. But every Christian has some Divine call. We have not the miracle to convey the call, and we do not want it. By the manifest claims that present themselves to us, by the discovery of our own powers and opportunities of service, by the promptings of our conscience, Christ calls us to our life's work. To see a work for Christ needing to be done, and to be able to do it, is a providential call to undertake it.

1. The call is an act of God's grace—"called me through his grace." God Himself—without the intervention of Apostles, without human intervention of any kind—had spoken to him the strong and gracious word which had broken his heart to penitence, and which had drawn him to Christ. There had been no movement towards Christ on his own part. He was on his way to Damascus, vehement, passionate in his hatred of the new sect, resolved to suppress it; it was God's "grace"—what else?—that "called" him to receive the Christian redemption and to preach the Christian Gospel. At that point, indeed, his own free response to the grace of God came in; till now, all that God had done to prepare him for his Apostleship was done without any free concurrence of his in God's great purpose; he had known nothing of it. Now, however, he might have thwarted and defeated the Divine love; but, as he says elsewhere, he "was not disobedient unto the heavenly vision."

2. The call is ever a secret between the soul and God. We have to find out for ourselves how our spiritual life is to develop and form itself: there is no programme we can draw up and publish as binding upon all who would fulfil the requirements of Christian service; nor is it demanded that the sacred summons, when we have heard and obeyed it, should affect us all in precisely the same manner, or work in all of us exactly similar results. When we yield ourselves to holy inspirations, it does not mean that our characters are, as it were, run into a common mould or

stamped with a common pattern. God may call you, and you may answer to the call and lift up your eyes to behold Him; but perhaps you may have a vision of Him totally different from the vision given to me; and according to our visions, according to the aspect in which each one of us has seen Him, will He control and affect our lives. One may grasp God by intellect, reaching up to Him through reasoning processes and exercises of thought. Another may be conscious of God coming near to him through the avenues of sensibility and feeling, be touched by the wonder of His majesty, overawed by the immeasurableness of His power. Yet another may be held to God by the influences of love, and may be constantly filled with the experiences of His tenderness and grace, and find the sweetness of a personal relationship with God the dominant factor in his spiritual consciousness. And so we get various types of the spiritual life, according to the various aspects in which various hearts behold God.

This thought of the essentially private and individual character of spiritual processes in the human heart deepens our responsibility and makes the spiritual life altogether a more solemn thing Somehow the ordinary views of the Christian life often leave us too easily satisfied. When we take it as involving the possession of certain feelings, as requiring the employment of certain phrases, we force ourselves into the use of the conventional words, we persuade ourselves that the necessary emotions have taken possession of our hearts, and we rest content with these utterly trivial matters, forgetting the more important aspects, the deeper and weightier concerns, of the spiritual life. But let us once realize that God's call to us is something we have to face absolutely alone! Solemn indeed is it to know that we are shut away with the ministries which God exercises upon us, and have to give ourselves up to their working and derive unaided from them the good they are meant to bring; that impassable lines are drawn round the place where God meets us and summons us to stand face to face with Him; that, as we bow before that majestic Presence, waiting for the sacred commands, all human companionships have to be left far away.

¶ I think you have rather confused the "inward motion of the Spirit" with the "call," which are not exactly coincident, though they must be mostly considered together. First observe the

distinct phrase used by the Church, "Do you trust that you are inwardly moved?" etc. The matter is frankly set forth as one of faith, not of sensible consciousness. The motion of the Spirit is to be inferred from its effects in and on our spirit; any other view is likely to degrade and carnalize our apprehensions of spiritual operations, not to exalt them. Now I do not think it possible for one man to lay down absolutely for another what inward thoughts and aspirations are or are not trustworthy indices to a genuine motion of the Holy Ghost; but the Church's words do themselves suggest some necessary elements of them—a direct and unmixed (I mean, clearly realizable and distinguishable) desire to be specially employed in promoting God's glory and building up His people. If a man does not feel a clear paramount desire,—often interrupted and diluted and even counteracted, but still distinctly present whenever he is in his right mind,—to tell men of God, and Jesus Christ whom He has sent, —in a word, to preach the Gospel, that is, announce the Good Tidings,—I very much doubt whether he has a right to "trust that" he is "inwardly moved by the Holy Ghost."[1]

## III.

### A Revelation.

**"It pleased God . . . to reveal his Son in me."**

This should be read along with the fuller narrative in the Acts. So read, it will be found quite intelligible. We learn from that narrative, that, for three days after Saul's arrest on the way to Damascus, he lay in the city without a ray of light—bound, as it were, in chains of darkness: there were scales on his eyes and a cloud on his heart. It was dark without and dark within; and he could neither eat nor drink. At length, on the third day, the cloud was taken away, he received his eyesight, and the peace of God filled his soul with light. Such is the account given in the Acts. Mark the secret history of the same blessed deliverance as it is given here.

He says that it pleased God to reveal His Son in him. Why *in* him? Why does he not say, "It pleased God to reveal His Son *to* me"? Was not the light which he saw an outer vision?

[1] *Life and Letters of F. J. A. Hort*, i. 278.

Did it not arrest him at midday with a glory above the brightness of the sun? Did it not bar the way to his old nature, and bid his life pause in the midst of his journey? Surely that picture of his Lord was a vision to his eye. But can any picture be a vision to the eye? Can a thing be revealed *to* me which has not been revealed *in* me? Is the landscape on which we gaze revealed only to the outward vision? No, or it would not be revealed at all; there could be no beauty without if there were not a sense of beauty within. Is the music to which we listen revealed only to the outward ear? No, or we should be deaf to it for evermore; there could be no harmony without if there were not a sense of harmony within. So is it with the beauty of Him who is fairer than the children of men. Often have we envied the lot of those who were permitted to gaze upon His outward form, to see the beam on His face, to hear the thrill in His voice. Yet was it not the very chief of these to whom the words were spoken, "Flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee"? It was not the *eye* that saw the beam, it was not the ear that heard the thrill; it was the soul, the heart, the life, the responsive spirit bearing witness with His spirit, the kindred sympathy that ran out to meet its counterpart, and found in Him all its salvation because it found in Him all its desire.

¶ As there is an external call and an internal—the former universal, but often ineffectual; the latter personal, but always efficient—so there is an outward revelation of Christ and an internal, of which the understanding and the heart are the seat. Hence it is, with the utmost propriety, said to be a revelation "*in us.*" The minds of men, until they are renewed, resemble an apartment shut up and enclosed with something which is not transparent; the light shines around with much splendour, but the apartment remains dark, in consequence of its entrance being obstructed. Unbelief, inattention, love of the world and of sin, and hardness of heart, form the obstructions in question. Let these be removed, and the discoveries of the word penetrate and diffuse a light and conviction through the soul: "The light shineth in darkness; and the darkness comprehended it not." Thus it was with St. Paul before his conversion: his prejudices against the gospel were inveterate, his animosity violent and active; but no sooner was Christ revealed in him, than all was changed.[1]

[1] Robert Hall, *Works*, v. 208.

¶ George Fox has given a very simple and impressive account of the experience which ended his long search for somebody who could "speak to his condition" and give him authoritative direction to a religion of verity and reality. "When all my hopes in men," he says, "were gone, so that I had nothing outwardly to help me, nor could tell what to do, then, O then, I heard a voice which said, There is one, even Christ Jesus, that can speak to thy condition; and when I heard it my heart did leap for joy. I knew experimentally that Jesus Christ enlightens, gives grace and faith and power. I now knew God by revelation, as He who hath the key did open." This is a typical piece of early Quaker biography. The testimony of the Yorkshire yeoman William Dewsbury is not so well known as that of Fox, but it comes up out of actual experience, and it, as well as that of Fox, has the power of a pure and sincere life behind it. His spiritual travail was long and hard, beginning when he was a boy of thirteen. "I heard," he says, "much speaking of God and professing Him in words from the letter of the Scripture, but I met with none that could tell me what God had done for their souls." At length all his "fig-leaf coverings were rent," the Lord "manifested His power" to him, and brought "the immortal seed to birth" within him, and he bears this personal testimony: "I came to my knowledge of eternal life not by the letter of Scripture, nor from hearing men speak of God, but by the Inspiration of the Spirit of Jesus Christ who is worthy to open the seals."[1]

1. This inner revelation meant the translation of the historical Christ into the present Christ; of the Christ according to the flesh into the Christ of spiritual consciousness. What is translation? It is (1) the extracting of a thought from its visible or representative envelope, and then (2) it is the recasting of this thought into another form of our own intelligent selection. By this process, faithfully carried out, we make the thought our own. We bring it out of its mere external relation to the mind as an object, and make it a part of our mind as subject. It is no longer something that we contemplate merely with the mind's eye, and which passes from memory when our attention is withdrawn, but it is now bound up with our mind, and must remain part of our conscious being.

St. Paul had never seen the Lord veiled in the flesh. He was not required to grope his way through preconceptions and pre-

[1] W. C. Braithwaite, *The Beginnings of Quakerism*, xxxv.

judices to a slowly maturing revelation. He learned with all the suddenness of a surprising and blinding vision what his fellow-Apostles had learned with dull, reluctant, and hesitating receptivity. The Divinity of the Lord came upon him almost as the dawning of a glorious summer morning after the deep darkness of the night, and he was able to grasp moreover the larger, deeper meaning of the Saviour's death and resurrection with a quickness and breadth of apprehension which had not been given to the rest. The spiritual significance of Calvary and of the empty sepulchre was read more promptly, if not more intelligently, by one who, with a richly inspired mind, looked at these things from afar than by those who had seen them with all their disguising surroundings; and it is to St. Paul that we owe the fullest exposition of these great facts and mysteries.

2. There was something deeper than this process of translation, there was actual identification with Christ. It seems no strain of language to say that in the consciousness of St. Paul, Christ was inseparable from himself. He could not abstract the *ego*, as metaphysicians would say, from a *non-ego*. He could not think of himself without thinking of Christ. "I am crucified with Christ."

St. Paul applies the same mode of thought to his converts and disciples. When, by the act of their own will, they became Christians, they were in spirit buried with Christ. At the same time, by realizing the Divine energy in themselves which raised Him from the dead, they were in spirit raised up along with Christ. It is upon this basis, thus firmly laid in the Christian consciousness, that St. Paul builds his system of conduct. The Christian conduct is a perpetual self-renunciation, a perpetual self-identification with the Spirit of Christ. It is the mind dying out of the earthly passions rooted in egoism, and living into the new ideal of manhood, the new creation. And so through the whole series of the historical events. They are renewed. They become history once again in the mind of the Christian. The selection of Christ as God's Beloved includes the selection of the Christian in Him; the exaltation of Christ to external glory means the present inward exaltation of the Christian to the heavenly regions.

¶ As a Methodist I have never dealt much with the favourite

Keswick doctrine of the sinner's identification with Christ in His death and resurrection. But on Good Friday I preached upon it —"One died for all, therefore all died," etc. As I was meditating on the subject, *after* I had preached, I saw with the vividness of a lightning flash, that it was my present personal privilege to reckon myself one with Christ in His risen life. In the same moment I knew that it was real—the world, the flesh, and the devil under my feet. I could have shouted for joy. The blessed freedom and the near access to God through Christ remain with me still. I suppose that my experience was somewhat similar to that of Dr. Dale when he had as clear a perception of the truth that Christ lives. How simple is the way of faith, and how simple is faith itself![1]

## IV.

### A Mission.

**"That I might preach him among the Gentiles."**

1. St. Paul recognized at once his obligation to be a witness for Christ. "That I might preach him." We are saved for service. Our receipts make our debt. We are not absolute owners, we are responsible trustees. "As every man hath received the gift, even so minister the same one to another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God." The men who had learned directly of Christ never regarded their spiritual gifts save in this aspect. They never once supposed that the heavenly light had been kindled in them solely for their own glory, that the Divine treasure had been bestowed upon them simply for their own enrichment, and that for their own sakes alone they had been singled out for a benefit so vast, a mercy so wonderful, a salvation so grand and complete. How could they suppose that, unless Calvary had developed in them the Pharisee's pride or the miser's greed? How could they entertain that thought, unless they had been plunged in a blinding maelstrom of intolerable self-conceit? What had they done to deserve this signal grace and the promotion from rude fishermen to companionship with the King of kings? No, they knew that the Divine love which had fixed itself on them was felt as fully and as freely towards the whole

[1] *John Brash: Memorials and Correspondence*, 102.

human race, and that the light had shone on their hearts first that through them the illumination might spread everywhere. It was not their own. It was the most sacred and responsible of trusts. It belonged to all men. To withhold it would be to rob men of what God had made their right. It would even be to deny and forfeit their own calling. "Woe is unto me, if I preach not the gospel." And everyone feels this who has truly understood and rejoiced in God's great gift. If it has not yet penetrated and suffused the hearts of all Christians, it is because selfish human elements have counteracted the workings of the Divine, and because man's littleness has brought God's great thought down to the measure of the market and the shop.

¶ What marvellous writing that of Paul is! There is a depth of meaning in it which seems unfathomable. Oh! for more of that man's spirit, his love, his faith, and above all his dauntless intrepidity for Christ. What a hero he was! What a splendid specimen of humanity! I am selfish enough to love him all the more because "his bodily presence was weak and his speech contemptible"; and yet no man ever did more for Christ and for Christ's world.[1]

¶ Dr. McLaren of Manchester writing to his friend Shields to thank him for a copy of his *Paul* which the artist had sent to him says: "Thank you for your noble 'Paul' (what do you call him saint for?). I think you have never done a truer embodiment of a great soul. The wasted eagerness, the weakness reinforced by supernatural strength, are magnificently rendered. I wish every lazy, smooth-haired and smooth-souled preacher had a copy of it hanging in his 'study' to flame down rebukes at him. I have had him framed to hang in mine, and you through him will spur me often."[2]

2. St. Paul's mission was wider than he at first dreamed. "Among the Gentiles." Naturally his soul turned towards his own people with ardent desire. Was he not an Israelite, of the seed of Abraham, of the tribe of Benjamin; and could he be indifferent to the needs of his brethren according to the flesh? Surely it would not be difficult to unfold the meaning of the sacred symbolism through which their forefathers had been disciplined in those very wastes. That the rock was Christ; that the

[1] *Dr. MacGregor of St. Cuthberts*, 120.
[2] E. Mills, *Life and Letters of Frederic Shields*, 331.

water which flowed over the sands foreshadowed His mission to the world; that the law given from Sinai had been fulfilled and re-edited in the holy life of Jesus of Nazareth; that the sacrifices offered on those sands had pointed to the death of the cross; and that the fire which burned in the bush had also shone on His face —to teach all this and much more, and to lead his people from the desert wastes of Pharisaism to the heavenly places of which Canaan was the type, was the hope and longing of his heart. What work could be more congenial to his tastes and attitudes than this?

But he came to learn that not as a privileged Jew, but as a sinful man, had Divine grace found him out. The righteousness of God was revealed to him on terms which brought it within the reach of every human being. The Son of God whom he now beheld was a personage vastly greater than his national Messiah, the "Christ after the flesh" of his Jewish dreams, and his gospel was correspondingly loftier and larger in its scope. "God was in Christ, reconciling," not a nation, but a "*world* unto himself." The "grace" conferred on him was given that he might "preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ," and make all men see the mystery of the counsel of redeeming love. It was the world's redemption of which St. Paul partook; and it was his business to let the world know it. He had fathomed the depths of sin and self-despair; he had tasted the uttermost of pardoning grace. God and the world met in his single soul, and were reconciled. In his latest Epistles, he declares that "the grace of God which appeared" to him, was "for the salvation of all men." "Faithful is the saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief." The same revelation that made St. Paul a Christian made him an Apostle of mankind.

¶ Often at the beginning of the new life we attempt to forecast the work which we hope to accomplish. We take into account our tastes and aptitudes, our faculties and talents, our birth and circumstances. From these we infer that we shall probably succeed best along a certain line of useful activity. But as the moments lengthen into years, it becomes apparent that the door of opportunity is closing in that direction. It is a bitter disappointment. We refuse to believe that the hindrances to the fulfilment of our cherished hopes can be permanent. Patience, we cry, will

conquer every difficulty. The entrance may be strait, but surely it is passable. At last we reach the wide and large place of successful achievement. We cast ourselves against the closing door, as sea birds on the illuminated glass of the lighthouse tower, to fall dazed and bewildered to the ground. And it is only after such a period of disappointment that we come to perceive that God's ways are not as our ways, nor His thoughts as our thoughts; and that He has other work for us to do, for which He has been preparing us, though we knew it not. When we are young we gird ourselves, and attempt to walk whither we will; but in after years we are guided by Another, and taken whither we would not.[1]

Is there some desert or some boundless sea
Where Thou, great God of angels, wilt send me?
Some oak for me to rend, some sod
For me to break,
Some handful of thy corn to take
And scatter far afield,
Till it in turn shall yield
Its hundredfold
Of grains of gold,
To feed the happy children of my God?
Show me the desert, Father, or the sea.

Is it Thine enterprise? Great God, send me!
And though this body lie where ocean rolls,
Father, count me among All Faithful Souls![2]

[1] F. B. Meyer, *Paul*, 65. [2] Edward E. Hale.

# The Spiritual Life.

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## The Spiritual Life.

**I have been crucified with Christ; yet I live; and yet no longer I, but Christ liveth in me: and that life which I now live in the flesh I live in faith, the faith which is in the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself up for me.—Gal. ii. 20.**

Martin Luther, commenting on the paragraph from which this text is taken, writes thus:—"It seemeth a very strange and monstrous manner of speaking to say—'I live, I live not: I am dead, I am not dead: I am a sinner, I am not a sinner: I have the law, I have not the law.' But," the Reformer goes on, "these phrases (seemingly strange and monstrous) are sweet and comfortable to all those that believe in Christ." The form of statement employed does not involve a real, but only an apparent, contradiction. No law of logic is broken by the Apostle when he first affirms, and then proceeds to deny. It is his striking and characteristic method of expressing deep facts of experience—as any one may perceive who has patience to consider what he means.

Three great ideas are suggested to us by this text—

I. The Historical Fact of Christ's Death.

II. The Reproduction of Christ's Death in the Christian.

III. The New Life in Faith.

### I.

### The Historical Fact of Christ's Death.

1. We have first the great central fact, named last, but round which all the Christian life is gathered. "The Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself up for me." To none of the Apostles did the appeal of the cross come with greater force than to St. Paul. He not only made Jesus Christ the centre of all his preaching, but he placed the cross at the very heart of the gospel. The burden of his message was Christ crucified, as he knew well that

the world's hope centred in Him. The necessary preliminary to the spiritual life is to grasp in some measure the great facts of the Incarnation and the Atonement, which form the foundation of our salvation and sonship. We must see God in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself. "He gave himself up for me"! He endued Himself with the robe of flesh, He entered the house of bondage, He took upon Him the form of a bondslave that He might set the bondslave free. He walked the pilgrim path of limitation, the path of sorrow and temptation; face to face He met the devil, face to face He met "the terror feared of man," becoming "obedient unto death, even the death of the cross." "He gave himself up for me"! And in that holy sacrifice of love, the holy law of God received perfect obedience, the violated law of God received a holy satisfaction, the sovereignty of the devil was smitten and overthrown, boastful death lost its sting, and the omnivorous grave its victory!

¶ No doctrine, no conception of the Atonement can explain to us the cross of Christ. We stand before that cross that we may gather its meaning for ourselves, that we may feel its import, that we may see its entire and absolute unlikeness to anything else, and so feel that its significance could be explained only by some conception of what we call the Atonement. This cannot exist to us as a logical statement. It exists as a vital truth. As we gaze upon the cross of Christ, and see the sacrifice that He there made, we see and feel that the perfectness of His suffering, the entire self-control that He possessed, and all the great drama of the Crucifixion, showed a beauty, a completeness of His manhood, which indeed bore our sins. Great was the power of sin, terrible was the exhibition of its power at the foot of the cross; but above all human vileness and corruption, above all human selfishness and self-seeking, above all temporary scheming and plotting there rose the perfect form of Him who was the Eternal Truth; who by His death and suffering testified against all the false seeming of the world and its power, who by His perfect patience and love overcame the pangs of death, who showed that there was something which was above and beyond the world, something which raises our hearts to Him, something which lifts us above those powers and forces under the influence of which our ordinary life is lived something which gives us a sense of redemption.[1]

[1] Mandell Creighton, *Counsels for Churchpeople*, 119.

O Life divine—
Poured out instead of mine—
O Sacrifice—
Who by Thy death hast paid my ransom price—
In whom I see
The righteousness which God accepts for me—

Pour out Thyself within me now:
Life of my life be Thou:
As deeper in Thy death I die,
Rise Thou within, and sanctify
Thy temple—working in me, to fulfil,
O living Christ, Thy Father's will.[1]

2. It is absolutely necessary for us to bring out afresh this aspect of the Christian religion by emphasizing the solitary prerogatives of the Christ as He stands in His exaltation and glorification far removed from all others who have claimed to found and explain their religions. Christianity is the religion of the cross and the throne—the vacant cross, the empty tomb, the occupied throne. It is the only religion that has its Founder living and working continuously for its triumph. Men have constructed theories of atonement and reconciliation, some of them repellent enough to the modern mind, yet the age-long effort to understand the wonder and mystery is only a witness to the fact that there are spiritual qualities in this death which lift it into a category by itself. The love that filled the Sufferer's soul, His loyalty to His calling and His God, His voluntary surrender of His life in defence of the Kingdom—because of these Divine achievements, His death becomes a redeeming and uplifting force.

3. Yet there must be points of contact between the cross of Christ and the cross which every follower of His has to carry. Unique in its redeeming efficacy, it is yet common in its ethical demand. Without this community of interest we should certainly feel more solitary and alone than ever He did in His agony.

¶ Don't you yourself feel that the sacrifice of Christ was truly the sacrifice of self at the very root of the humanity? It is written in the Epistle to the Hebrews that He "put away sin by the sacrifice of himself." Sin consists in self-seeking; and sin can

[1] Edith H. Divall, *A Believer's Songs*, 105.

therefore be put away by no other means than the sacrifice of self —a sacrifice, however, which must be reproduced in every soul of man before he is individually delivered from sin. Christ's sacrifice cannot be unlike anything else in the world—it is the very type of what must be done by the spirit of Christ in every human being.[1]

Lord, when the sense of Thy sweet grace
Sends up my soul to seek Thy face,
Thy blessed eyes breed such desire,
I die in Love's delicious fire.
O Love, I am thy sacrifice;
Be still triumphant, blessed eyes;
Still shine on me, fair suns! that I
Still may behold, though still I die.

Though still I die, I live again,
Still longing so to be still slain;
So gainful is such loss of breath,
I die e'en in desire of death.
Still live in me this longing strife
Of living death and dying life;
For while Thou sweetly slayest me,
Dead to myself, I live in Thee.[2]

## II.

### The Reproduction of Christ's Death in the Christian.

1. The relation of man to the cross in the act of faith is two-fold; the cross of Christ is that from which we escape by His presence there, and yet the cross of Christ is that to which we come in identification with Him. There is an aspect of the cross of Christ concerning which we never can say, "I have been crucified with Christ"; there is, on the other hand, an aspect of the cross of Christ concerning which every Christian man or woman ought to be able to say experimentally, as well as theoretically, "I have been crucified with Christ." The substitutionary work of the cross is outside me, but the principles upon which Jesus passed to the cross and accomplished the marvellous work are

[1] *Letters of Thomas Erskine of Linlathen*, ii. 219. [2] Richard Crashaw.

principles to which, in virtue of His substitutionary work thereon, I am called into identification of life with Him.

In the devotional literature of the Middle Ages one reads much of "the process of Christ." All that has been accomplished in the Redeemer is reproduced in the life of the redeemed. This "process," however, begins not in the manger of Bethlehem, but on the cross of Calvary. It was in the article of death that our Lord finally and completely entered into our life of demerit and liability. And therefore the first step in our process of identification with Him is our entrance into His death. If Christ died instead of us, then He rose instead of us—which is blackest despair. He died for us, not instead of us. He did not die to save us from dying; He died that we might die with Him. He did not rise instead of us; He rose that we might rise with Him. St. Paul's words are decisive: "I have been crucified with Christ." Paul would never place an impassable gulf between Christ and His followers. To him religion was union with Christ, in death and in life.

2. We know what St. Paul meant by being "crucified with Christ." He meant the utter renunciation of every purpose that had once kindled his fiery soul into energy—the final forsaking of all the social charms or individual ambitions for which most men care to live; the acceptance without a murmur of a life-course that was restless and homeless, beset with ceaseless peril, and crowned with sorrow; the patient endurance of the keen shafts of ingratitude flung at him by the churches he had formed, and by men who owed their all to him—it meant, in short, a self-crucifixion so profoundly real that the roll of ages has not its equal.

In the Epistle to the Galatians the Apostle talks thrice of nailing up the old self on the cross where the Saviour of sinners surrendered His soul to death; and although in each case the thought of the writer reaches far beyond the immediate scope of the particular reference, his deliberate purpose is to direct our attention successively to the believer's death to law, to sin, and to the world of temptation. The law, by which St. Paul means all the irritation, the tiresomeness, of the legal religion, and all the hardness and the Pharisaism which it produces, is nailed to the

cross. The flesh, with its affections and lusts, the personality as developed under the influence of desire and emotion running in certain habits, illicit or unclean, is nailed to the cross. And the world—by which he means the visible order of things as organized against God—is nailed to the cross.

He is not describing a merely inward spiritual experience when he says: "I have been crucified with Christ." He is describing his attitude of evangelical fidelity; he has consecrated himself to have fellowship with Christ's sufferings—to die as Christ died. He is not indulging in poetical sentiments concerning suffering in general, or concerning the mission of pain, or concerning the general groaning and travailing of the moral world. He is not speaking in a parable of the griefs and burdens of moral and spiritual experience, for he could not thus teach the lesson of the cross. He is simply asserting that he has such communion with the gospel of Jesus and the purpose of the Messiah to abolish ritualism and its deceptions as to face even crucifixion.

¶ We can't choose happiness either for ourselves or for another; we can't tell where that will lie. We can only choose whether we will indulge ourselves in the present moment, or whether we will renounce that, for the sake of obeying the Divine voice within us—for the sake of being true to all the motives that sanctify our lives. I know this belief is hard: it has slipped away from me again and again; but I have felt that if I let it go forever, I should have no light through the darkness of this life.[1]

For the glory and passion of this midnight,
I praise Thy name, I give Thee thanks, O Christ!
Thou that hast neither failed me nor forsaken,
Through these hard hours with victory overpriced;
Now that I too of Thy passion have partaken,
For the world's sake called, elected, sacrificed.

Thou wast alone through Thy redemption vigil,
Thy friends had fled;
The angel at the garden from Thee parted,
And solitude instead,
More than the scourge, or Cross, O tender-hearted,
Under the crown of thorns bowed down Thy head.

[1] Maggie Tulliver, in *The Mill on the Floss*.

But I, amid the torture and the taunting,
I have had Thee!
Thy hand was holding my hand fast and faster,
Thy voice was close to me,
And glorious eyes said, "Follow me, thy Master,
Smile as I smile thy faithfulness to see."[1]

3. Death means separation, and life means union. By being brought more and more into sympathy with Christ's death unto sin, we become more and more thoroughly separated from its service and defilement. It is not merely separation from sinning it is separation from the old self-life. The great hindrance to the manifestation of the Christ-life is the presence and activity of the self-life. This needs to be terminated and set aside. Nothing but "the putting to death of the Lord Jesus Christ" can accomplish this. Conformity to His death means a separation in heart and mind from the old source of activity and the motives and aims of the old life. St. Paul's own descriptive phrase for this deliverance and transformation is—"I have been crucified with Christ." In every one there is something perfectly natural which is at the same time utterly ruinous, and the successful life must therefore be a life of crucifixion. Some insurgent sinfulness must be beaten down, slain, and extirpated. The unsparing devotion of Christ to us is to be reciprocated in the power of the Divine Spirit. We are not to stop short of complete crucifixion to everything that stands between us and obedience to His will. The spiritual life, strictly speaking, begins here with the principle of self-renunciation unto death.

¶ Among the last letters which Madame Guyon wrote, was the following to her brother, Gregory de la Mothe; an humble and pious man, connected with the Order of the Carthusians:—

"Separation from outward things, the crucifixion of the world in its external relations and attractions, and retirement within yourself, are things exceedingly important in their time. They constitute a preparatory work; but they are not the whole work. It is necessary to go a step further. The time has come when you are not only to retire *within* yourself, but to retire *from* yourself;—when you are not only to crucify the outward world, but to crucify the inward world; to separate yourself absolutely and wholly from everything which is not

[1] H. E. Hamilton King.

God. Believe me, my dear brother, you will never find rest anywhere else."[1]

## III.

### The New Life in Faith.

St. Paul does not merely speak of crucifixion and death; he connects it with life. Newness of life is the one great characteristic of his own experience. It is of the very essence of the Apostle's teaching. The Christian, according to his teaching, not only dies and is buried with Christ, but is quickened together with Him. He rises unto Christ, he lives in Christ; nay, the Christian dwells in Christ, and Christ in the Christian.

1. The contradictions and contrasts of the text, on which the Apostle dwells so emphatically, are full of meaning. The idea which they express is that of the death of one life and the rising of another, and in no other way could he express it so forcibly. Had he simply said "I live," he would but have brought out the idea of a life coming from death. But by contrasting one with the other, by denying life, and yet asserting it, by saying, "I have been crucified: yet I live," he has shadowed forth, in the most powerful form, the thought of a new and beautiful life rising from the crucifixion in which the old and carnal life expires. "I live; and yet no longer I, but Christ liveth in me." "I have actually lost my own individuality in Christ"—that is what it comes to. These phrases give a precise statement of St. Paul's ideas concerning the relation between the disciple and his Lord. That the Apostle's own experience did not always touch these heights is of course true; for one sets over against this passage other passages wherein he declares how the sin that still dwelt in him interrupted and spoilt this utter identification of himself with Christ which constituted his ideal; but that it was his ideal, there is no manner of doubt.

2. St. Paul clearly makes the indwelling of Christ a matter of definite experience after the first knowledge of Christ. Witness his petition on behalf of the Church at Ephesus, "that Christ

[1] Thomas C. Upham, *Life of Madame Guyon*, 492.

may dwell in your hearts by faith," based upon the petition that God would grant them, "according to the riches of his glory, to be strengthened with might by his spirit in the inner man." Thus the strengthening work of the Holy Spirit, His confirming us in faith and love, is to lead up to the definite experience of an indwelling Christ. An ungrieved Holy Spirit is to work mightily until there shall be nothing in us contrary to the Saviour's will, so that our obedient hearts may be a pleasant abiding-place for the Holy Christ. Then dormant powers shall be aroused and shall troop forth out of their graves, powers of holy perception and holy desire, and holy sympathy, and holy faculty for service. Old powers shall be renewed, and they shall be like anæmic weaklings who have attained a boisterous vitality. Our powers are far from their best until they become united to Christ. If we want to see what love really is, and will, and conscience, and chivalry, we must see them at home, in their native clime, rooted and grounded in the life and love of the eternal Lord.

¶ Just as the glad sunny waters of the incoming tide fill the empty places of some oozy harbour, where all the ships are lying as if dead and the mud is festering in the sunshine, so into the slimy emptiness of our corrupt hearts there will pour the flashing sunlit wave, the ever-fresh rush of His power; and everything will live whithersoever it cometh, and we shall be able to say in all humility, and yet in glad recognition of Christ's faithfulness to this His transcendent promise, "I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God."[1]

3. We must not fail to notice that St. Paul's *faith* is the connecting link between him and the spiritual life. "The life which I now live." If any man may be said to have literally lived his life, that man was St. Paul. As far as we can trace back his history, we find him no dreamer, but in intense activity on whatsoever path he moved. In his early devotion to Judaism, no less than in his later loyalty to the Christian religion, there was, above all, intensity. But no one can fail to see in the man a great change after he had the revelation of his crucified and risen Master. He still lived his life; he was still intense, energetic, persevering, consistent, but the principle of action was changed.

[1] A. Maclaren, *The Holy of Holies*.

New light had burst upon him; a new power had taken possession of him; the life that he henceforth lived, he lived by the faith of the Son of God. He is the concrete example of the true principle of a noble Christian life—"faith in the Son of God."

¶ That unpretending but celebrated book, *The Marrow of Modern Divinity*, was intended to throw light upon questions concerning consolation to the individual sinner through his personal faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. Faith (it should be remembered) not only believes a doctrine but welcomes a person, a personal deliverer or saviour. It takes Christ, who is actually offering Himself in the gospel to every sinner who has ears to hear. A believer cleaves to Christ as his living Saviour, brother, and friend; and all this, through his private personal dealing with the Saviour, not through a notion of the safety of the company of believers and of himself as one of them. "The life that I live in the flesh," said Paul, "I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved *me* and gave himself for *me*." Therefore the most scriptural theologians tell us that in the nature of true faith there is an actual appropriation. And (says a modern writer) "The Marrow-men wanted to bring back the appropriating persuasion still more strongly put by many Reformation theologians."[1]

4. For this, then, Christ our Saviour was content to suffer death on the cross—not that the Father might be made to love us, but that we might have life, and have it in abundance. And those who have that life, and feel it leaping up within them unto life eternal, tell us with one voice that it flows from the cross of Christ. Search through the ages, search through every land, and wherever you can find one who verily knows the powers of another world, he will tell you with St. Paul, "I have been crucified with Christ; yet I live; and yet no longer I, but Christ liveth in me: and that life which I now live in the flesh I live in faith, the faith which is in the Son God, who loved me, and gave himself up for me."

¶ I want to realize more and more in my own experience the truth of these words, "Nevertheless I live, yet not I, but Christ liveth in me." What an honour, what a privilege, to have Christ by His Spirit dwelling within us, the motive power and mainspring of our life! To have Christ within, nailing our corruptions and selfishness in all its forms to His cross, working in us and speaking through us, so that our whole lives may be a testimony

[1] D. C. A. Agnew, *The Theology of Consolation*, 62.

to Him! The heart sickens when one thinks how far one comes short, but then we are dead to sin and self, *i.e.* as regards guilt and freedom from condemnation. And we are commanded to "reckon" ourselves so, and "alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord," *i.e.* through Christ living in us. Thus Christ is made unto us sanctification as well as wisdom and righteousness and redemption; and we are complete in Him.[1]

¶ Paul's real claim to be enrolled in the list of mystics is found in his normal experience. Over against a single experience of being "caught up into Paradise" in ecstasy, in the first stages of his Christian period, we can put the steady experience of *living* in heavenly places in Christ Jesus which characterized his mature Christian period. Over against the inrushing of a foreign power, which made his lips utter words which did not come from himself, we can put the calm but mighty transfiguration of personality which was slowly wrought in him during the fourteen years following his ecstasy: "With unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, we are being transformed into the same image, from glory to glory (*i.e.* gradually) by the Spirit of the Lord." We must be very modest in making assertions about Paul's "central idea." But it is well on safe ground to say that his "Gospel" cannot be understood if one loses sight of this truth The Christian must re-live Christ's life, by having Him formed within, as the source and power of the new life. The autobiographical passages give the best illustration which we have of this normal mystical life. The earliest passage which we have comes out of the great contest with legalism. His opponents say that this salvation comes through obedience to a divinely mediated and time-honoured "system" of rites and ordinances. He says: "Christ lives in me"; "I bear in my body the marks of the Lord Jesus"; "God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into our hearts crying Abba, Father."[2]

[1] *Memorials of Rev. F. Paynter*, 65.

[2] Rufus M. Jones, *Studies in Mystical Religion*, 12.

# The Mission of the Son.

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## The Mission of the Son.

**When the fulness of the time came, God sent forth his Son, born of a woman, born under the law, that he might redeem them which were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons.—Gal. iv. 4, 5.**

1. It is not wonderful that God should love us and care for us, for, though we are so far from Him and so unworthy, He made us: and we know that "God is love." But though it is natural that God should love the world that He made—though we might be quite sure that He would love it—the manner in which He showed His love to us, and the length to which He carried His love, is indeed past wonder. It is not merely His love, but the way in which His love took the world by surprise, that makes us rejoice.

This is the great wonder of the love of God—not that He loved mankind, but that He loved them beyond this world; not that He redeemed them, but that He came Himself to redeem them by becoming one of them. This was the awful surprise which burst upon the world when first it was told among men that their God and Maker had come down to earth, and had been born of a woman, and had lived a poor man's life, and had died the death of a slave. No wonder that it startled Jew and Gentile, Greek and barbarian —startled some to love and adoration, startled others to unbelief and mockery. Some were drawn to repentance and a holy life, while others were driven away in shuddering fear at so awful a surprise, at so near a God. No wonder that those who did not receive it counted it as foolishness. It must be so unless one sees in it the inconceivable and infinite love of God. It must be a stumbling-block to every one who thinks what it is, that God should be made Man to give everlasting life to men, unless it is to him the spring and source of all that is deepest in his thankfulness, most serious in his faith, most transporting in his joy.

2. The most frequent form under which the great fact of the

Incarnation is represented in Scripture is that of our text—"God sent his Son." It is familiar on the lips of Jesus, but He also says that "God gave his Son." One can feel a shade of difference in the two modes of expression—the former bringing rather to our thoughts the representative character of the Son as Messenger, and the latter going still deeper into the mystery of Godhead and bringing into view the love of the Father who spared not His Son but freely bestowed Him on men. Yet another word is used by Jesus Himself when He says, "I came forth from God," and that expression brings into view the perfect willingness with which the Son accepted the mission, giving Himself, as well as being given by God. All three phrases express harmonious, though slightly differing, aspects of the same fact, as the facets of a diamond might flash into different colours; and all must be held fast if we would understand the unspeakable gift of God. Jesus was sent; Jesus was given; Jesus came. The mission from the Father, the love of the Father, the glad obedience of the Son, must ever be recognized as interpenetrating and all present in that supreme act.

Our text tells us:—

I. The Time at Which Christ Came into the World.
II. The Manner in Which Christ Came.
III. The End for Which Christ Came.

## I.

### The Time When Christ Came.

**"When the fulness of the time came, God sent forth his Son."**

No one can study any of the great movements which have made history without observing that it had two conditions—there was the man, and he came at the time. Certain ideas had long been simmering in the popular mind, a train of circumstances had been laid, a multitude was ready to rise; but those were only forerunners, anticipations, auxiliaries. Nothing would have come to pass, and the morning glow would have faded into darkness, had not the secret yearning in many hearts taken shape in a single man. No one could have foretold his origin; no one can

take credit for training him; no one can boast afterwards of having been his colleague. From behind the veil he comes—from a palace, or from a cottage, or from a college, or from a desert. Upon him is laid one burden, and he rests not till it is fulfilled; he is incalculable, concentrated, forceful, autocratic. Now he is the idol of the people; now he is their victim; he is ever independent of them, and ever their champion. They may not understand him, yet he expresses them; they may put him to death, yet he accomplishes their desire. These are the makers of the race through whom God intervenes in human history; in Jesus, the chief of them all, God became incarnate.

Between the man and his time there must be a certain correspondence, else he cannot have full course. Nothing is more pathetic than the experience of one who has arrived too soon, delivering a message which will be understood to-morrow, but which to-day is a dream; attempting a work which to-morrow the world will welcome but which to-day it considers madness. He dies of a broken heart an hour before sunrise. Nothing is more ironical than the effort of one who has arrived too late, for whom there was an audience yesterday, for whose cause there was an opportunity; but now the audience has dispersed, and the field is taken; he has missed his tide, and for him another will not come. It may be said that Jesus was independent of time and environment. As a person, yes! who never could have been hid or altogether have failed. As a worker, no! for this were to ask an endless miracle. Had Jesus come in Samuel's day, no one would have understood His Kingdom; had He come in the second century, there had been no opening for His Kingdom. There was a brief space when the life seed of Hebrew thought was ready for the sower, and the Roman Empire still remained a quiet field for the sowing. This was the fulness of the time, and Jesus appeared.

1. *The fulness of the time.*—This remarkable expression, "the fulness of the time," is, with a slight variation, once used by St. Paul elsewhere: he calls the gospel, when writing to the Ephesians, "the dispensation of the fulness of times." In both cases he means by "fulness" that which fulfils or brings to completion; the arrival of a given moment which completes an epoch; the hour which fills up its appointed measure and brings

it to a close. It was in a like sense that our Lord and His Apostles used the word "hour" as marking a particular point in His life, determined in the counsels of God.

Such language is fully understood only when we bear in mind that that succession of events which, looking at it from our human point of view, we call time, is distributed upon a plan eternally present to the Divine Mind; and that particular persons or particular characters are assigned, in heaven, their predestinated place in this succession. "To everything," says the Wise Man, "there is a season, and a time for every purpose under the heaven." All the lesser incidents of our lives are really arranged in a preconcerted order. There is a "fulness of the time" at which, and not before, we can understand particular truths or undertake particular duties, because for these truths or duties all that has preceded has been a preparation.

Now, our Lord's arrival on the scene of human history corresponds with the general law so far as this, that He came when a course of preparation, conducted through previous ages, was complete. But He was not the product of His own or of any preceding age. What is true of great men who are only great men is not true of Him. They receive from their age as much as they give it; they embody and reflect its spirit; they seize upon the ideas which are in circulation, and, whether by speech or action, express them more vividly than do others; their generation does a great deal for them; it is pleased with them because it sees itself reflected in them; and their power with it is often in an inverse ratio to their real originality. With our Lord it was otherwise. He owed nothing to the time or to the country which witnessed His Advent; He had no contact with the world of Greek thought, or of Roman politics and administration. He borrowed Rabbinical language enough to make Himself intelligible; but no Rabbi could have said, or could have omitted to say, what He did. The preceding ages only prepared His way before Him, by forming the circumstances, the convictions, the moral experience of His countrymen and others; and thus a preceding period, marked in the counsels of God, had to be run out. At last its final hour had struck, and that hour was "the fulness of the time"; it was the moment of the Advent.

2. *The historical preparation.*—There can be no doubt what St. Paul had in his mind when he wrote of "the fulness of the time." He was a Jew, and the story of his race, with all its vicissitudes, was ever present to him. He was a Roman, and all around were the evidences of the political supremacy of his nation. He was an educated man—a moralist, a logician, a philosopher—and could measure the intellectual strivings which had marked the closing years of the pre-Christian era.

Palestine, where the Saviour of Mankind was born, lay at the very centre of the then known world, and it has been picturesquely put that "the City of God is built at the confluence of three civilizations." Each of these civilizations—Jewish, Greek, Roman—helped to complete what the Apostle called "the fulness of the time." The Jews' contribution was religious. Idolatry among them had, it is true, died out, but legalism and ceremonialism were in the ascendant, and, as always happens when we offer men's souls husks, there was a demand among some of them for rich spiritual food. Devout minds were weary of the hair-splitting of the Rabbinical schools, of the mere mechanism of piety, of the "aimless circle of complicated rules," and there were pious hearts that longed for purity and peace and a loftier revelation of the Divine. Above all, there was the expectation, throbbing intensely in the heart of every good Jew, of a Deliverer, an Emancipator, a Messiah, who, like another and a greater Judas Maccabæus, should at least free their race from the Roman dominion.

The exquisite literature and profound thought of the Greeks were eminently calculated to prepare the way for the diffusion of Christianity: for the ancient faiths could not survive the pitiless criticism of Greek philosophy. This criticism, though seldom made with the express intention of destroying the popular religion, necessarily exposed its crudities and immoralities; and gradually filtered through to the very lowest strata of society; but, like modern Rationalism, Greek philosophy failed to satisfy the higher aspirations of mankind. The Greeks provided a language which became the medium for the propaganda of the new religion; for, after the conquests of Alexander, Greek thought and the Greek language became the standard and medium of art, of commerce and literature, throughout three-fourths of the known world. Every Greek colony was a centre of Greek thought and

influence, and diffused Greek ideas among the neighbouring peoples, and brought them into contact with the distinctive Hellenic conceptions. These colonies—especially through the Dispersion, or foreign colonies of the Jews—exerted a profound influence on the Jewish nation. Influenced by the literary activity of the Greek peoples and the surrounding courts, and impelled by their religious necessities, the Jewish settlers of Alexandria translated the Old Testament into Greek; and by the partial assimilation of the Greek philosophies and adaptation of their philosophical terminology to religious and theological use, prepared a suitable terminology for the accurate expression of the revelation of God in Christ in a form intelligible to the ancient world.

The expansion of the Roman Empire, whereby the whole civilized world passed under one government, provided the necessary political conditions for the diffusion of the religion of the Christ and the extension of the Kingdom of God. The Roman peace secured freedom of intercommunication; the Roman roads, by enabling rapid transit from one part of the Empire to another, provided the means of a rapid missionary propaganda, so that Ethiopia and Gaul, if not Britain, Babylon, and Spain, heard the first gentle whisperings of the gospel of the grace of God before the crucifixion of Christ was a thirty years' old event.

Christ came to die for us. If He had come a hundred years earlier, the Roman State would have had no authority in Judæa, the world-power would have had no part in His condemnation, and the manner of His death would not have been that foretold. If He had come a hundred years later, the consenting of the Jewish religious authorities to His death would have been impossible; for their Temple was then destroyed and their nation exiled from the land of promise. The conditions of redemption, therefore, would not have been fulfilled. At the one point and moment in history where the favourable religious, intellectual, and political conditions met, the Son of Man was born at Bethlehem.

3. *Darkness before the dawn.*—The Saviour of the world did not come a day too soon, for the decay and death of men's religious beliefs had been accompanied by the destruction of morality, and at the birth of Christ the state of the world was deplorable in the

extreme. In that enlightened age the moral sense of man had become completely blunted, and the national conscience was a thing of naught. "Immorality, sensuousness, grossness, gluttony, cruelty, bestiality, sordidness, sycophancy, untruthfulness, were," says Professor Wenley, "never so rife at one time; and as if to render the situation even more gloomy, acts such as we should regard with utter revulsion amounting even to physical sickness, were perpetrated not in secret, but in the light of common day, and this without arousing anything in the nature of serious or unanimous protest."

> When Jesus came
> The world was all at peace in utter wickedness.

Doubtless, the testimony borne by Juvenal, Tacitus, Suetonius, Persius, and Martial, to the abounding and shameless iniquity of their time, may be held as referring in the first place and for the most part to life in Rome and in those pleasure cities of the Empire which imitated or taught the capital. Among Rome's hundred million subjects there would be, at all events in country districts, many whose lives were fair and worthy. And even in Rome itself there would be some of whom it could not be said that they loved the darkness rather than the light because their deeds were evil. But the facts would seem to show that such were the exception which goes to prove the rule. Speaking broadly and generally, men and women had fallen away from the eternal laws of righteousness and were walking in the vanity of their minds, according to the whims of evil hearts, the promptings of sinful passions, or the suggestions of depraved and degrading inclinations.

The Incarnation is thus a predestined event in the furtherance of the redemption and education of humanity. It occurs in the "fulness of the time." That is the primary fact. It is not an accident. It is part of, and fits into, a fully articulated plan of world-redemption. It closes an epoch. It opens a new era. It is not a separable accident, cut off from the rest of the life of the race; it is an integral part of it, with vital relations to its earliest manifestations, and to its latest, and to each and every experience of man between the first and the last. It is no afterthought. It happens just when it ought to happen, when it was

meant to happen, when it could take its place and do its work most effectively. The time receptacle, into which the centuries and millenniums had been poured, was full up to the precise moment when this great event should be added; and it was added just then.

Earth was waiting, spent and restless,
With a mingled hope and fear;
And the faithful few were sighing,
"Surely, Lord, the day is near;
The desire of all the nations,
It is time He should appear."

Still the gods were in their temples,
But the ancient faith had fled;
And the priests stood by their altars
Only for a piece of bread;
And the Oracles were silent,
And the Prophets all were dead.

In the sacred courts of Zion,
Where the Lord had His abode,
There the money-changers trafficked,
And the sheep and oxen trod;
And the world, because of wisdom,
Knew not either Lord or God.

Then the spirit of the Highest
On a virgin meek came down,
And He burdened her with blessing,
And He pained her with renown;
For she bare the Lord's Anointed
For His cross and for His crown.

Earth for Him had groaned and travailed,
Since the ages first began;
For in Him was hid the secret
That through all the ages ran—
Son of Mary, Son of David,
Son of God, and Son of Man.[1]

[1] Walter C. Smith, *Hymns of Christ and the Christian Life.*

## II.

### The Manner in Which Christ Came.

**"Born of a woman, born under the law."**

There can be no question that in the text, as is shown by the juxtaposition of "sent" and "born," and in all the New Testament references to the subject, the birth of Jesus is not regarded as the beginning of the being of the Son. The one lies far back in the depths of eternity and the mystery of the Divine nature, the other is a historical fact occurring in a definite place and at a dated moment. Before time was the Son was, delighting in the Father, and, "in the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God," and He who in respect of His expression of the Father's mind and will was the Word, was the Son in respect of the love that bound the Father and Him in one. Into the mysteries of that love and union no eyes can penetrate, but unless our faith lays hold of it, we know not the God whom Jesus has declared to us. The mysteries of that Divine union and communion lie beyond our reach, but well within the grasp of our faith, and the work of the Son in the world, ever since there was a world, is not obscurely declared to all who have eyes to see and hearts to understand.

1. *The Divine and the human.*—The sending of the Son took effect in the birth of Jesus, and the Apostle puts it under two forms, both of which are plainly designed to present Christ's manhood as His full identification of Himself with us. The Son of God became the son of a woman; from His mother He drew a true and complete humanity in body and soul. The humanity which He received was sufficiently kindred with the Divinity which received it to make it possible that the one should dwell in the other and be one person. As born of a woman the Son of God took upon Himself all human experiences, became capable of sharing our pure emotions, wept our tears, partook of our joys, hoped and feared as we do, was subject to our changes, grew as we grew, and in everything but sin was a man amongst men.

What does this mean but that, when God gave His supreme

revelation of His own essential nature in its relation to humanity, He came not as an alien to our planet but as a native? Not in angelic form, robed in the brightness of a far-away mystery, lifted high in His temple—not so did He come; but as a Man, as a definite individual, along a recognized line of descent, with the marks of the village on His face and form, one of the common people, a Hebrew of the first century. That, to St. Paul, was the outstanding and amazing mystery of the Incarnation—that there should be so little outward mystery about it; and the outstanding wonder of it was that through its common everyday human aspect there shone forth from the heart of it an inner mystery of quickening light and power which made life glorious for all who accepted it as God's truth for them.

2. *Born under law.*—The Incarnation is the revelation of the binding force of natural law, to the necessities of which God Himself yields up His Son. It is the loud proclamation of the deference God pays to that Nature which is His own creation. Where, indeed, can we learn more emphatically than from the cross of Christ the validity, the sanctity of those natural conditions which God, of His own will, obeyed, even to the death of His Son, rather than break?

Christ was under law in that the will of God dominated His life, but He was not so under it as we are on whom its precepts often press as an unwelcome obligation, and who know the weight of guilt and condemnation. If there is any one characteristic of Jesus more conspicuous than another it is the absence in Him of any consciousness of deficiency in His obedience to law, and yet that absence does not in the smallest degree infringe on His claim to be "meek and lowly in heart." "Which of you convinceth me of sin?" would have been from any other man a defiance that would have provoked a crushing answer if it had not been taken as a proof of hopeless ignorance of self; but when Christ asks the question, the world is silent. The silence has been all but unbroken for nineteen hundred years, and of all the busy and often unfriendly eyes that have been occupied with Him and the hostile pens that have been eager to say something new about Him, none has discovered a flaw, or dared to "hint a fault."

That which is really startling in the birth and life of Christ is

not the extent of its miraculous display, but its strange and severe limitation; not in the degree to which He exercised His Godhead, but in the degree to which He emptied Himself of it. That is what bewilders and astounds us far more than any miracle. Men talk as if we Christians were brimming with a childish and reckless exuberance of supernaturalism. How distorted a misconception! Is not the wonder all the other way? Is it not amazing that a creed which starts with such tremendous assertions about the Person of its Founder should keep itself so well in hand, so rigidly under control, that its main force is spent in exhibiting the loyalty with which this only-begotten Son of God submitted to every ordinance of man and of nature, how He bent Himself down to the hard and narrow frontiers of His natural lot? For one man who is disturbed by the miracles we preach, there are twenty who are upset by the rigorous absence of miracle from our account of salvation. "Why this slow and painful dealing with sin and with sorrow?" they ask impatiently. "Why does not God act with greater freedom? Why does He not lay bare His holy arm? Why this roundabout method of redemption? Why this cruel insistence on His Son's suffering and death? Why give Him over to the hour of darkness? Why not take away the bitter cup? Why not rend the heavens and come down?" We know but too well the appeal, the passion, the misery of those questions![1]

3. *The veiled glory.*—Christ was the revelation of God in the sphere of time and sense. The splendour of Jehovah was veiled by the seamless robe; under the mechanism of frail flesh throbbed the energy which built the world; the gentle tones of the voice unheard in the streets disguised the accents of the thunder; and beneath the weakness which slept, fainted, and expired was hidden the might of Omnipotence. That Christ was God, that He became man, possessing a true human body and a true human soul, is the distinct teaching of the evangelic narrative. God manifests Himself in nature, history, and conscience; but here is a supreme, personal, and unique revelation of Himself—the Divine clothing Himself with the human that He might redeem the human.

[1] H. Scott Holland.

Is it possible for the Infinite God to become expressed in human form? Is not the idea self-contradictory? Certainly it is if we think of the Infinite as physical or as quantitative. But if we think of it as spiritual and qualitative—of the *ethical* Infinite, which God *is*—of perfect righteousness and love, and believe that the human personality is in the image of the Divine, we can see that the essential life of God can be as fully expressed in a human as in any conceivable form.

If there is nothing derogatory to the honour of God in His dwelling within the physical universe, and in manifesting Himself through suns and stars, hills and seas, forests and flowers, there cannot be anything contrary to the Divine glory in assuming that He should take up His special abode in a human body, and reveal Himself through its marvellous organs. There seems, indeed, no shrine so fitting for the Divine indwelling and manifestation as a pure human body. "The human face divine" can express more than a sun, the rounded forehead speak more than arched skies, the eyes shine out deeper things than stars, the lip reveal secrets which winds and waves can never utter, and the actions of human life are rich in suggestion hidden from the foundations of the world. The human body is less bright than the heavens, less large than the earth, but, to utter things deep and high, a finer organ than either.

¶ After referring to man being fearfully and wonderfully made —the body "the tent-like habitation in which he journeyed through the wilderness which lay between the two eternities,"—Dr. Robertson pointed out the fitness of the comparison of the human body to a house or temple; spoke of its flesh-built walls being covered with skin, richly tapestried; he described it as colonnaded with bones, fitted with a frame-work, vault-like, marble white, that bore up, and over-arched the chambers of the hidden life within, and with conduits that sent forth red streams which ebbed and flowed from the heart's cistern, and conduits of the subtle nerves, strung from side to side, from wall to wall, from the lowest basement to the loftiest pinnacle, along which telegraphic messages were sent with more than lightning speed. It was, too, a house in motion, and, pertaining to it, what dignity, what majesty! how exquisite in form and symmetry! so delicate and tender, like David's harp of many strings, like the æolian lyre, vibrating to the wind's slightest breath.[1]

[1] A. Guthrie, *Robertson of Irvine*, 321.

Thou inmost, ultimate
Council of judgment, palace of decrees,
Where the high senses hold their spiritual state,
Sued by earth's embassies,
And sign, approve, accept, conceive, create;

Create—thy senses close
With the world's pleas. The random odours reach
Their sweetness in the place of thy repose,
Upon thy tongue the peach,
And in thy nostrils breathes the breathing rose.

To thee, secluded one,
The dark vibrations of the sightless skies,
The lovely inexplicit colours run;
The light gropes for those eyes.
O thou august! thou dost command the sun.

Music, all dumb, hath trod
Into thine ear her one effectual way;
And fire and cold approach to gain thy nod,
Where thou call'st up the day,
Where thou awaitest the appeal of God.[1]

## III.

### The End for Which Christ Came.

**"That he might redeem them which were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons."**

In how sharp a contrast the Divine method of reform, of revolution, stands to the declaration of the greatest of the idealists in the days before Christ. Plato, as he sorrowfully reviewed the actual Athens with which he found himself encircled, pronounced, in his prophetic work on human society, that its true reformer and saviour would be known by this mark—that he would demand for himself "a clean canvas" before he consented to begin. He could do nothing unless he were allowed to remove from out of the influence and tradition of their home a whole generation of children; only thus could he obtain the clean canvas

[1] Alice Meynell, *Poems*, 111.

he needed. If only the weary burden of our inherited complication could be thus freely cast off! If only we could lay hands, in the violence of love, on the little children, and sweep them off into some new Garden of Eden! If only we could run a sharp dividing knife between us and the rueful past! Surely there is in that demand a deep and touching pathos which stirs us into tender admiration of the noble-hearted genius who made it. But its pathos must not disguise from us that it is a confession of failure, of impotence, of despair. The reformer who asks first for a clean canvas to begin upon is a reformer who refuses to grapple with his task, refuses to face his facts. He condemns himself by making the demand; for what is asked of him is that he should help us to better the life that now is, the situation in which he and we find ourselves. We do not need him to tell us how well he could construct another form of life under changed conditions. No; it is the very note of all the old failure to redeem the world by philosophy which is struck in the sad Platonic phrase, "Give me but the children—give me a clean canvas!"

How different is the view of the possibilities of human nature presented by St. Paul, who tells how the Son of God assumes our human nature, takes to Himself perfect manhood, which He exalts and glorifies, through which He manifests the life of God, showing that Divine works may be wrought in it, that God can be perfectly pleased by the service which it renders, and in His own exaltation to the right hand of God, lifting up that nature to the same place for evermore. And thus He not merely affirms such a union to be possible, but in His own Person realizes it to the uttermost, that so it may in its measure be realized in all whom He had made His brethren—the Son of God becoming also Son of man, that the sons of men might in their turn become sons of God.

Not only is Christ the Ideal Man, not only is He the great Redeemer from sin, but in Him the gift of sonship is communicated to God's elect, since He is the one in whom we are born unto God. And it is this gift of sonship that is the highest of the gifts of grace communicated to us in Christ Jesus. It is more than the gift of redemption. God who looks on us, creatures born of Adam and sunk in sin, might have restored to us Adam's forfeited position through the sprinkling of the blood of Jesus

Christ. That were to redeem us; but He adds something more. Havingredeemed, He gives to us "the adoption of sons," and so in this gift of sonship the hunger of humanity is satisfied as it is brought home to God.

1. *Adoption of sons.*—Adoption was essentially a Roman and not a Jewish custom. The law of Moses nowhere recognizes it, and the Jews had no word to express it. But with the Romans it was an everyday occurrence for a person having no children of his own to adopt as his son one born of other parents. Adoption was a formal act, effected either by the process named *adrogatio*, when the person to be adopted was independent of his parent, or by *adoptio*, specifically so called, when in the power of his parent. The effect of it was that the adopted child was entitled to the name and *sacra privata* of his new father, and ranked as his heir-at-law; while the father on his part was entitled to the property of the son, and exercised towards him all the rights and privileges of a father. In short, the relationship was to all intents and purposes the same as existed between a natural father and son.

It is this that was in the Apostle's mind when he spoke of υἱοθεσίαν enjoyed by Christians. The word occurs nowhere in the LXX., nor is it used by any writer of the New Testament except St. Paul, who has actually been supposed to have first framed the word for his own use. We need not perhaps go quite so far as to assert this, although it appears to be a fact that the word is not found in any earlier Greek writer whose works still exist. It is, however, likely to have been employed as the nearest equivalent to *adoptio* by those Greek teachers from whom we suppose the Apostle to have learnt the elements of law; and whatever we may think of the history of the word, there can be little doubt that it was the Roman custom that supplied the Apostle with the illustration which he develops most fully in his Epistle to the Roman Christians.

"That we might receive the adoption of sons," really embraces everything else. All the benefits of redemption are here contained. If we have "the adoption of sons," we have everything. What can a child in a father's house have more than his full place there? His position, his privileges, his prospects are as

high as they can be. If a father who is good and rich and influential gives his children a happy home under his roof-tree and treats them as children in all respects, there can be no more that he can do for them—there is no more that would be good for them to receive. If this be so in the human relationship must it not be yet more so as between God and His people? If He is the Father, and I am the child, then there is nothing between me and infinite wealth and goodness and blessedness. If He is my Father, He can give me everything I need. If I am His child, I can receive His benefaction, up to the limits of my nature and circumstances.

2. *A mystery of light.*—The Son had become flesh that they who dwell in the flesh might rise to be sons, but the Son stands alone even in the midst of His identification with us, and of the great results which follow for us from it. He is the Son by nature; we are sons by adoption. He became man that we might share in the possession of God.

There are many mysteries—deep, unsolved mysteries—behind the word Incarnation. There are mysteries of darkness, and there are mysteries of light, and this is a mystery of light, for it has light at its core. And we must not lose the mystery in the light, nor the light in the mystery. As Browning:

> I say the acknowledgment of God in Christ,
> Accepted by the reason, solves for thee
> All questions in the earth or out of it.

That is to say, if this is true then is life a great thing, with a Divine meaning in it and a Divine end for it. The horizon of our nature lifts, and spreads out and takes in heaven itself within its scope. Forgiveness becomes a mighty fact and a mighty power. Duty takes on a warmer look; trouble ceases to be a real calamity; death loses its ultimate terror; immortality becomes a sure hope. The Incarnation transfigures the universe for all who can really accept it in its fullest implications. And therefore let us live in the light of this great fact—that in Jesus Christ God has come to us, and spoken with us, and offered Himself for us and to us, that we may offer ourselves to Him, and so be filled with His fulness. Let its light shine on our daily path. Let its glory

pierce our darkest moments. Let its grace meet all our need. Let its hope brighten all our shadows. "Great is the mystery" of religion, that God should become human; but greater its inspiration, for its end is that man might become Divine.

¶ She was within a very little of the end, we thought, even then while it was still possible to carry her into the garden and lay her in the shelter of her tree, where, the last time but one that she was out, she wrote the second paper of this part. She thought so herself, as her meditation shows. "I feel not so much desire for the beauty to come," she says, "as a great longing to open my eyes a little wider during the time which remains to me in this beautiful world of God's making where each moment tells its own tale of active, progressive life in which there is no undoing. Nature knows naught of the web of Penelope, that acme of anxious pathetic waiting, but goes steadily on in ever widening circle towards the fulfilment of the mystery of God. There are, I take it, two master keys to the secrets of the universe, viewed *sub specie æternitatis*, the Incarnation of God, and the Personality of Man: with these it is true for us as for the pantheistic little man of contemptible speech, that 'all things are ours,' yea, even unto the third heaven."[1]

The world is a bubble, and Death shall die:
Love shines longer than lights in the sky.

The moon is a cinder; the sun grows old:
Love's fire only shall never wax cold.

The stars burn out, but the lamp of Love
Illumines for ever the Blessed above.

Love is the soul of the song they sing
Through the day that fears not an evening.

The song of their love shall for ever resound
In the ears of the Love whom their God hath crowned.

Crowned in heaven is the Love who came
For love of the loveless to sorrow and shame.

Deathless in heaven is the Love who died;
Adored, whom Caiaphas crucified.

[1] *Michael Fairless: Her Life and Writings*, 84.

Here by His love is His Church led forth
From the east and west, from the south and north,

Ever a pilgrim, through snow, through heat,
Through life, through death, till she kiss Love's feet—

Yea, my God, till her glad eyes see
Love, the Lord of Eternity![1]

[1] G. A. Chadwick, *Poems Chiefly Sacred*, 8.

# True Religion.

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## True Religion.

**For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision availeth anything, nor uncircumcision; but faith working through love.—Gal. v. 6.**

It is remarkable to notice how large a space in the history of mankind is occupied by controversies about religion; they have existed at almost all times, and in almost all countries; and sometimes, as, for example, in the early days of Christianity, and at the period of the Reformation in Europe, they have absorbed all other controversies into themselves, and have gathered, as it were, into a single focus all the scattered energies of men.

In the text St. Paul tells us (1) what is the non-essential, and (2) what is the essential of true religion, and we shall deal with it under these two headings.

### I.

### The Non-Essential.

**"In Christ Jesus neither circumcision availeth anything, nor uncircumcision."**

1. The great controversy which embittered so much of St. Paul's life, and marred so much of his activity, turned upon the question whether a heathen man could come into the Church simply by the door of faith, or whether he must also go through the gate of circumcision. The Jewish literalists in Galatia insisted on the rite of circumcision as necessary to salvation; they contended that Christianity was but a phase or form of the earlier religion which God had sanctioned, and that the ceremonial which had been enacted with so much minuteness of detail was not intended to pass away but to be good for all nations and for all times. It was contended on the other side that the revelation which God had made in early times was partial and incomplete, and that the

regulations which He had sanctioned for the Jews were in their very nature temporary, and were from the first intended to pass away.

False teachers misrepresented the Apostle to both parties; accusing him to the Jews of undervaluing the Law, because he allowed the Gentiles to disregard it; affirming him to the Gentiles to be an abettor of superstition, because he permitted the Jews to conform to it. It was then that St. Paul, in the fiery indignation of his just wrath, advanced to the relief of those hard-pressed loyal Galatians who were still holding out against the Judaizers; designing at the same time to teach a wholesome lesson to all who, at the first proof of their faith, had deserted to the ranks of error; and moreover determined to destroy, as far as possible, the enemy's power of doing mischief. "Neither circumcision availeth anything, nor uncircumcision," says St. Paul, "but faith." You know, he says, that your salvation comes through faith. The proof that you have faith lies—in having faith. But, if you yield to the persuasion of the Judaizers, and suffer yourselves to be circumcised, you cease to have faith in Christ, you cease to benefit by His grace, and Christ will no longer profit you, as I protest and reiterate: in that case you put your trust in the Law, and you must trust to it alone, and be a slave to it in its entirety. In itself the act of circumcision has no effect; it is nought; but your accepting it now is a proof that you no longer trust to Christ, that you no longer have faith.

2. The controversy seems to be merely a controversy of the times; it concerns the distinctive ordinance of a people who were peculiar by choice and provincial by conviction. We see, however, that the ordinance of circumcision has a significance beyond itself. It stands not only for an item of ritual, but for the ritual interest of every heart. It represents here, in St. Paul's words, not only an act of ceremonial conformity, but the attitude and bias of the conforming spirit. It is descriptive, not only of one act which religious people did, but of a religious tendency of thought, of a particular way of taking things, of a kind of religious life. Therefore, as St. Paul speaks of circumcision, and deals with it as a thing which, in itself, is unavailing, there rises before us as the object of his criticism a

character rather than a deed—a character to which circumcision seems all-availing, to which a conventional rectitude, and a ceremonial consistency, and an ecclesiastical shibboleth are the things by which the world must stand—or fall. Because this man, this life, this character, is in the world to-day, the criticism still applies. Thus these words of St. Paul are the master-key to all the controversies which have raged, or are raging still, within the Christian Church, or within the still wider sphere of the religious life of mankind.

For circumcision much might be said from a Hebrew point of view. It was the sign of the covenant under the Old Testament dispensation. It had been solemnly commanded to Abraham, and he and his race had been circumcised; and to be uncircumcised was equivalent to being outside the covenant of promise. This was well known to the Apostle, and on occasion he could recall the fact that he himself had been circumcised the eighth day. But it was because the Jews prided themselves on their external descent from Abraham, without being at all anxious to know and to reproduce in their own lives the spirit and the character of the great patriarch, that St. Paul, in the preaching of the gospel, felt himself morally bound to encounter them with the most aggressive hostility. There could be no compromise between a gospel inspired and permeated by the pure inwardness of moral motives and a claim of superiority before God, founded on external observances, accidental advantages, or ancestral traditions of whatever kind. The thing that produced the spiritual result was not the rite but the truth, and therefore he felt that his function was to preach the truth and leave the rite to be administered by others. And so we can extend the principle here to all externalisms of worship, in all forms, in all churches, and say that in comparison with the essentials of an inward Christianity they are nothing and they do nothing.

¶ When the zeal of a Christian doth leave the internals of religion, and fly to ceremonials, externals, or inferior things, the soul must needs consume and languish: yea, though you were sure your opinions were true, yet when the chiefest of your zeal is turned thither, and the chiefest of your conference there laid out, the life of grace decays within, and your hearts are turned from this heavenly life. Not that I would persuade you to undervalue

the least truth of God; yet let every truth in our thoughts and speeches have its due proportion, and I am confident the hundredth part of our time and our conference would not be spent upon the now common themes. For as there are a hundred truths of far greater consequence, which do all challenge the precedency before these, so many of those truths alone are of a hundred times nearer concernment to our souls, and therefore should have an answerable proportion in our thoughts. Neither is it any excuse for our casting by those great fundamental truths, because they are common and known already. He is a rare and precious Christian who is skilled in the improving of well-known truths. I could wish you were all understanding men, able to defend every truth of God. But still I would have the chiefest to be chiefly studied, and none to shoulder out your thoughts of eternity. The least controverted points are usually most weighty, and of most necessary frequent use to our souls.[1]

3. Even in the full career of his denunciation of error, St. Paul preserves the balance of his judgment. Circumcision cannot avail you anything, he is insisting. But he pauses to add "nor uncircumcision."

He speaks in criticism of another tendency, and he points the failure of another character. The ritualists trusted in the presence of a ceremony to save them; but the anti-ritualists were beginning to trust in the absence of one. They had gained, to some extent, the vision of the Christian's liberty. They understood, to a degree, the preaching of our freedom in Jesus Christ. They had learned that the days of hard formality and of exacting usage were gone by. Especially among the Gentiles was there somewhat of a disposition to exult. They had heard it said that in Christ Jesus "circumcision" is unavailing. They were making, in consequence, a great deal of "uncircumcision." It was a mystery to St. Paul that men should extol their bonds, and glory in ceremonial requirements. But it was at least equally a mystery to him that men should put their trust in merely theoretic freedom, and boast themselves of a liberty which they never exercised for the purposes of a higher faith or worthier manhood. Circumcision cannot avail anything, he has said; and then with clear reference to the temptation of those whose cause he was defending, he adds emphatically, "nor uncircumcision."

[1] Richard Baxter.

O we boast us of our law,
Glory in our gospel light,
Pity those who cannot draw
Fresh the living water bright;
We are favoured, we are blest,
We have heard the joyful sound,
We are sons of God confessed,
We are free who once were bound.
Bless the Lord who unto us
Is in mercy plenteous.

Ah! but what if we are still
Walking on in sinful ways,
Keeping a rebellious will,
Lusting for the world's poor praise?
What if we are growing old,
None the wiser for the rod?
What if we have faith in gold,
Not in either man, or God?
Shall we praise the Lord that we
Have nor faith nor charity?

Not the hearer of the word,
But the doer, he is just.
He who, knowing not the Lord,
Keepeth yet his soul from rust,
He who doeth what is right,
Bravely stands by what is true,
Faithful to his inner light,
Dark although it seem to you—
He is nearer God than they
Who know truth and disobey.[1]

4. True religion is not an outward thing. It does not consist in names or forms, in distinctions or privileges, in meats or drinks, in rites or ceremonies. These have their value. As long as we are here on earth, living in the flesh, we must have outward forms and symbolical rites. But such externals are not worth anything unless they make us grasp more firmly with our understanding, and feel more profoundly with our heart, the great truths of the gospel. It is a large attainment in Christian character to be able to say with St. Paul, Circumcision is nothing, and un-

[1] Walter C. Smith, *Thoughts and Fancies for Sunday Evenings*, 97.

circumcision is nothing. Neither the one side nor the other touches the essentials.

¶ The difference between art and nature shadows forth the difference between obedience in the Mosaic dispensation and the obedience of Christ. It is the difference between the artificial flower and the garden rose, between the sculptured figure and the breathing body; the one shaped from outside, the other determined from within. It is the difference between the mechanical and the vital; the one unsympathetic and constrained, the other organic, instinctive, voluntary, delightful. The law is henceforth put within our mind, written in our heart.[1]

¶ In the dusty room in the Interpreter's House described by Bunyan in the *Pilgrim's Progress*, we again have the Law and the Gospel, but this time under a new aspect and with a lighter touch. Formerly the Law kills, here it only irritates, producing that condition of confusion, turmoil, darkness, dirtiness, which is just the thing known as dustiness—a thing by itself. "I have had enough," as Cheever makes Christian say, "of that fierce sweeper, the Law. The Lord deliver me from his besom!" The only thing which can remedy this morbidly irritated condition is the Gospel in its sweet, clean and allaying power. When a man finds its peace, the mirrors of the soul are clear again, and reflect truly the face of God and the things of the world.[2]

## II.

### The Essential.

**"Faith working through love."**

The antithesis of this text appears, in somewhat varied forms, in two other places in the Apostle's writings. To the Corinthians he says, "Circumcision is nothing, and uncircumcision is nothing, but the keeping of the commandments of God." His last word to the Galatians—the gathering up into one strong sentence of his whole letter—is, "In Christ Jesus neither circumcision availeth anything, nor uncircumcision, but a new creature." Now, all these assertions embody substantially the same opposition between the conception of Christianity as depending upon a ceremonial

[1] W. L. Watkinson, *The Gates of Dawn*, 49.
[2] John Kelman, *The Road*, i. 58.

rite, and as being a spiritual change. And the variations in the second member of the contrast throw light on each other. In one, the essential thing is regarded from the Divine side as being not a rite performed on the body, but a new nature, the result of a supernatural regeneration. In another, the essential thing is set forth as being not an outward act but an inward principle, which produces appropriate effects on the whole being. In yet another, the essential thing is conceived as being not a mere ceremonial but practical obedience, the consequence of the active principle of faith, and the sign of the new life. There is an evident sequence in the three sayings. They begin with the deepest, the Divine act of a new creation, and end with the outermost, the last result and object of both the others—deeds of conformity to God's law.

1. *A new creation.*—St. Paul did not believe that external rites could make men partakers of a new nature, but he believed that, if a man would trust in Jesus Christ, the life of that Christ would flow into his opened heart, and a new spirit and nature would be born in him.

The story of the Christian Church is but the record of the fact that men have been born again, that old things have passed away, and all things have become new. One has only to think of the writer of these texts, and of the change from Saul the persecutor to Paul the Apostle, to have evidence of the reality of the new birth. One has only to think of Augustine, of Luther, of John Bunyan, to recognize that the new creation is one of the great facts of human experience. It commences with an awakening to the full consciousness of the dignity and lofty destiny of man as a moral being, and with a deliberate purpose and plan to carry it out to its legitimate consequences in the life of an essentially social animal. This is what in the New Testament narrative of apostolic preaching, and in many well-known religious biographies of recent date, is called *conversion*; and there can be no doubt both of the necessity and of the reality of such a process. Men come to know that a new strength has entered into their lives, and they recognize that it has come from no source within their previous experience. Need we wonder that they accept the Scripture explanation of the great fact, and say, "I live; yet not

I, but Christ liveth in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me"?

¶ Plato describes earthly life as follows: "Men sit in a cavern with their backs towards the light. Therefore they only see the shadows or simulacra of what passes in front of the cavern. Whoever hits on the brilliant idea of turning round, sees the originals, the realities in themselves, the light." So simple is it! Only to turn round, or be converted, in a word. But it is not necessary on that account to become a monk, ascetic, or hermit. I almost agree with Luther that faith is everything. Our deeds lag far behind, and need only consist in refraining from all deliberate evil. As a beginning, one may be content with not stealing, lying, or bearing false witness. If we have greater claims and wish to train ourselves into superman, we may. But if we do not succeed, we should not throw the whole system overboard, but ceaselessly commence anew, never despair, try to smile at our vain efforts, be patient with ourselves, and believe good of God. When the religious man falls, he gets up again, brushes himself, and goes on; the irreligious man remains lying in the dirt. Thus the whole art of life consists in not turning one's back to the light.[1]

2. *Faith working through love.*—Faith is the first act, or state, of the new creation. It is the new creature come to the consciousness of himself, of his relations to his Maker, of his surroundings and of his meaning. Certainly he must know and believe that there is a God; and he must understand His character, as a just as well as a beneficent Being; then he must become acquainted with God's law, as holy and decisive, reaching to the inmost intents of the heart; and then, far above everything else, he must be forced to see plainly that—out of His sovereign grace—God has opened a way of pardon through an atoning death of His own Son. These must be known as primal truths under the gospel; then they must be believed, and that is *faith*.

Now faith, according to St. Paul, when once it lives in the soul, is all Christian practice in the germ. The living apprehension of the Crucified One, whereby the soul attains light and liberty, may be separable in idea, but in fact it is inseparable, from a Christian life. If the apprehension of revealed truth does

[1] A. Strindberg, *Zones of the Spirit*, 112.

not carry within itself the secret will to yield the whole being to God's quickening grace and guidance, it is spiritually worthless. Faith, if it is to be good for anything, must be a *working* faith. If our faith puts us to sleep instead of awakening activity, if it sends us to bed instead of sending us to the field or the workshop, it is not worth having. It is a grace which saves and justifies, but it is also a grace "which *worketh*." There must be correspondence between our emotional faith and our daily lives. In proportion as we feel fervent emotions of love towards God, so will our lives exhibit earnestness of purpose and activity of energy in "doing good" to the souls and bodies of our fellow-men. This sacred energy of the soul manifests itself in a life of holy love. It is set in active hostility to all forms of evil, to all selfishness, and to everything which tends to hinder its appropriation of Christ. So faith leads us into wider knowledge, into more active self-mastery, and to the growth of the whole man in knowledge, righteousness, and true holiness. It sets free every power of man for further growth and for ampler service. And the goal is the fulness of the stature of a perfect man in Christ Jesus.

¶ The early Christians felt that virtue, like sin, was a subtle universal thing, entering into every act and thought, appearing outwardly in ten thousand diverse ways, diverse according to the separate framework of every heart in which it dwelt; but one and the same always in its proceeding from the love of God, as sin is one and the same in proceeding from hatred of God. And in their pure, early, and practical piety, they saw that there was no need for codes of morality, or systems of metaphysics. Their virtue comprehended everything, entered into everything; it was too vast and too spiritual, to be defined; but there was no need of its definition. For through faith, working by love, they knew that all human excellence would be developed in due order; but that, without faith, neither reason could define, nor effort reach, the lowest phase of Christian virtue.[1]

¶ I never have stopped, I hope I shall never stop, to consider what set or sect of people are at work, if I thoroughly and entirely approve of the work. I may think the work incomplete; but, if it comes in my way, and I think it good as far as it goes, I do help it with the little power I have. Above all I would not in this age refuse help to a society because it did not state that it was working in Christ's cause. I do believe we want all generous

[1] Ruskin, *Stones of Venice*, ii. ch. viii. (*Works*, x. 365).

and good work recognized as Christ's, whether conscious or unconscious. I think the tendency is very much for doubters to think the best work is done by benevolent unbelievers; to think our faith cramps our labours and narrows our hearts. I would like, so far as in me lies, to show them we care for men as men, we care for good as good. I never would deny faith. I care very little to express it anywhere but in life. How much these people lose by their omission I believe they will one day know. I think the time will come when all this round world will seem to them mainly precious, because it was made by a Father and redeemed by His Son.[1]

3. *Keeping the commandments of God.*—As the new creation is the beginning of the distinctively Christian life, and as faith working through love marks the evolution of its growth, so the third thing, keeping the commandments of God, may be said to indicate its consummation. The loftiest purpose of God, in all His dealings, is to make us like Himself; and the end of all religion is the complete accomplishment of that purpose. "Be ye imitators of God as dear children," is the pure and comprehensive dictate which expresses the aim of all devout men.

To become like Christ is to be one who keeps the commandments of God. For the Man Christ Jesus not only obeyed the Law in all its precepts, negative and positive; He was one in whom the full meaning of the Law, its higher and more ultimate purpose, obtained a glorious realization. The law marked out boundaries, defined the borders of action, but within these borders and subject to these limitations Christ Jesus showed in the fulness of a perfect human life the worth and value of that life the limit of which law had defined. Here there was in living, concrete form the realization of what law was meant to define, for the sake of which law was brought into existence. Now the new creature, born of God, growing by faith that works through love, just in proportion to its growth, is growing into the likeness of Christ, and so growing into the power of keeping the commandments of God, as Jesus kept them.

¶ Do not let us understand by what is called a "commandment" a peremptory mandate delivered by organs of speech, and giving orders to the Son, as to a subordinate, concerning what He

[1] *Life of Octavia Hill*, 184.

ought to do. Let us rather, in a sense befitting the Godhead, perceive a transmission of will, like the reflexion of an object in a mirror, passing without note of time from Father to Son.[1]

¶ The question, in the last analysis, is between self and Christ, between works and grace. That is the evangelical crux of faith. It is quite true that "character is salvation," and that goodness is goodness all the world over. Yet the fact remains that the more character and goodness we have, the less we are satisfied with it, and the more surely we are driven back on the redeeming love of God in Jesus Christ. Every advance in character only reveals more surely the infinite stretch of moral height and depth. And the more hopelessly we realize this, the more urgently do we feel our need of One to cast ourselves out on, good and evil alike, that we may lose all, and so find all in Him. After all, character *is* salvation: and there is a very real danger in any presentation of Christianity that would seem even to the most ignorant kind of man to disparage character. There is a popular hymn which contains the lines:

> Doing is a deadly thing,
> Doing ends in death.

And Joannes Agricola's Calvinism leads him to the confident assurance that—

> I have God's warrant, could I blend
> All hideous sins, as in a cup,
> To drink the mingled venoms up;
> Secure my nature will convert
> The draught to blossoming gladness fast.

It is easy to see how dangerous such ideas may be to ill-balanced natures and untrained consciences.[2]

[1] St. Basil.

[2] John Kelman, *The Road*, ii. 157.

# The Fruit of the Spirit.

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## The Fruit of the Spirit.

**The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, meekness, temperance: against such there is no law. —Gal. v. 22, 23.**

This text needs no introduction. But by way of exposition we may divide it into three parts, and consider (1) the Nature of the Fruit of which the Apostle speaks; (2) its Variety—this being the chief thing here; and (3) its Culture.

### I.

### The Nature of The Fruit.

1. The fruit is the creation of the Holy Spirit. The fruit of the Spirit is not something that springs out of our old nature, amended, educated, refined; not something that we create in ourselves by our own will or effort, but something that is wrought in us by Divine power and energy. As well might a gardener try to cover a dead stick with green leaves and luscious fruit. The thing is impossible. Every bit of the "fruit" which God loves is the work, from first to last, of the Holy Ghost. His is all the glory. And only in the simplest dependence upon Him, and in surrender of ourselves to His almighty influence, can we ever know this blessed "fruit" as ours, to the glory of God.

2. And yet this fruit must grow from something that is within the man. It must be a genuine product of human life. "Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; . . . I say unto you, that even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these." Why not? He was certainly larger, and he probably had more colours in his garments—why not arrayed like one of these?

Because the lily grew, and all the colours in the lily came from within, while all the glory of Solomon was a glory put on him from without. The glory of a house is the glory of the man who built it, not primarily of the man who lives in it. The glory that is put on a man is not a man's own glory. The glory that does not grow is spurious.

¶ You do not make a character as you build a house, laying one stone upon another; nor do you alter it as you might alter a house, pulling out these stones, and putting others in. It grows by inherent power, assimilating, rejecting, amplifying or transmuting, as though that which comes to it were food, which indeed it is—food from heaven or from hell. And every particle of this food that is truly incorporated in the man's life goes to change character through and through, may be trusted to do it. Therefore, behind laws outworn and habits that should be outgrown, the charity that believes all things and hopes all things discovers the man as he really is, with promise of the man that he will be.[1]

3. For the perfection of the fruit, the spiritual must master the natural. We have to do with a twofold nature—that which we share with all living things, and the new nature which we must win, and the winning of which represents an endless, never-ceasing task. Philosophers may be left to decide how these two natures are related to one another; the distinction is undeniable, and is rooted in every soul. And the power which leads us to the higher nature we name the Spirit of God. The lower nature urges a people simply to follow the materialistic instinct of self-preservation, to fight to the end in the struggle for existence, the struggle for fodder and a place at the stall. The Spirit of God, on the other hand, teaches that "man lives not by bread alone," and that his supreme task is to win an abiding relation to the Eternal.

Angels of Growth, of old in that surprise
Of your first vision, wild and sweet,
I poured in passionate sighs
My wish unwise
That ye descend my heart to meet,—
My heart so slow to rise!

[1] *Michael Fairless: Her Life and Writings*, 74.

Now thus I pray: Angelic be to hold
In heaven your shining poise afar,
And to my wishes bold
Reply with cold,
Sweet invitation, like a star
Fixed in the heavens old.

Did ye descend: what were ye more than I?
Is't not by this ye are divine,—
That, native to the sky,
Ye cannot hie
Downward, and give low hearts the wine
That should reward the high?

Weak, yet in weakness I no more complain
Of your abiding in your places:
Oh! still, howe'er my pain
Wild prayers may rain,
Keep pure on high the perfect graces
That stooping could but stain.

Not to content our lowness, but to lure
And lift us to your angelhood,
Do your surprises pure,
Dawn far and sure
Above the tumult of young blood,
And, star-like, there endure.

Wait there! wait and invite me while I climb;
For see, I come! but slow, but slow!
Yet ever as your chime
Soft and sublime,
Lifts at my feet, they move, they go
Up the great stair of time.[1]

## II.

### The Variety of the Fruit.

1. The Apostle enumerates nine graces, but he describes them all as "fruit" not "fruits." And this is true to life, for the Holy Spirit always clusters His work. One Christian virtue necessarily

[1] David Atwood Wasson.

raises up another; there is no such thing as sanctification in a single point. As one berry in a bunch of grapes cannot ripen without the others ripening too, so it is with the Christian. Try to eradicate one sin of your character, and you will invariably find that in doing so you will weaken, if you do not pull up, another. Cultivate one good trait, and you will be surprised to find how many more seem to grow up, you scarcely know how, at its side. So that this is often the best way to carry on one's own edification—to concentrate one's prayers and self-discipline upon one particular point of attainment, not only because by that fixedness we shall best secure the growth and the attainment which we desire, but also because by cherishing that one excellence we shall promote all.

2. The list is not to be regarded as exhaustive. Indeed the catalogue of qualities after which men should aspire in what is called "the Sermon on the Mount" varies very much from the catalogue that is given here. There is not a word said in the Sermon on the Mount about love or faith or hope; and here there is not a word said about patience under suffering and persecution. "Longsuffering" is spoken of, but by that is not meant suffering under persecution. If we turn to Philippians and to Ephesians we shall find still further descriptions of Christian character; and they are not like any of the others. The fact is, it is simply impossible for any man to make a list which is exhaustive of the developments of the human mind. A true manhood in Jesus Christ means the education of every faculty; and the qualities which spring out of the combinations of these faculties must be well-nigh infinite. No man can exhaust the alphabet. There is practically no end to the possible combinations of its letters. The separate human faculties are more numerous than are the letters of the alphabet; and they can, by combination and culture, develop qualities *ad infinitum*. Therefore, we never look for a perfect human portraiture. We look for just enough hints to suggest in our minds that which we cull and fill up by the imagination and through our knowledge; but it would be vain to attempt to describe all that may be developed in a full, manly nature, under the Divine inspiration and culture. That would be attempting an impossibility.

¶ Sometimes, when I read books in which perfection is put before us with the goal obstructed by a thousand obstacles, my poor little head is quickly fatigued. I close the learned treatise, which tires my brain and dries up my heart, and I turn to the Sacred Scriptures. Then all becomes clear and lightsome—a single word opens out infinite vistas, perfection appears easy, and I see that it is enough to acknowledge our nothingness, and like children surrender ourselves into the Arms of the Good God. Leaving to great and lofty minds the beautiful books which I cannot understand, still less put in practice, I rejoice in my littleness because "only little children and those who are like them shall be admitted to the Heavenly Banquet." Fortunately—"there are many mansions in my Father's house"; if there were only those—to me—incomprehensible mansions with their baffling roads, I should certainly never enter there.[1]

3. Yet there is a sequence in the order of these fruits. The list begins with "love" and ends with "temperance." We should have expected the reverse of the order, but in the realm of the Spirit we begin with the best and ripest and juiciest, and then pass to the plainer and more severe. The fact of the matter is, the one is assured by the other, and this is the order of the assurance: create love, and you have the conditions of a fine self-control; obtain the juiciness of the first, and the seeming harshness of the last is never known. We may take them in three triads. The first three express our possible relationship to God—"love, joy, peace." The next three express our possible relationship to our fellows—"longsuffering, gentleness, goodness." The last three express our possible relationship to ourselves—"faithfulness, meekness, temperance."

4. The first of these triads is "love, joy, peace." We cannot call them duties or virtues; they are simply the results of communion with God—the certain manifestations of the better life of the Spirit. Love, of course, heads the list, as the foundation and moving principle of all the rest. It is the instinctive act of the higher life and is shed abroad in the heart by the Holy Spirit. It is the life sap which rises through the tree and gives form to all the clusters. The remaining two members of this triad are plainly consequences of the first. Joy is not so much

[1] *Sœur Thérèse of Lisieux*, 305.

an act or a grace of character as an emotion poured into men's lives, because in their hearts abides love to God. Jesus Christ pledged Himself to impart His joy, so that it should remain in us and our joy should be full. There is only one source of permanent joy which takes possession of and fills all the corners and crannies of the heart, and that is love towards God equally abiding and all-pervasive. Peace will be built on love and joy, if our hearts are ever turning to God and ever blessed with the inter-communion of love between Him and us. True peace comes not from the absence of trouble but from the presence of God, and will be deep and passing all understanding in the exact measure in which we live in, and partake of, the love of God.

¶ "Caritas," which is in fact nothing else but "the energy and representative of the Spirit in our hearts," expands and asserts itself, and makes its power to be known by its fruits of love, joy, peace and pity in the character of man. Mark, then, how joy springs out at once as the unfailing token of the Holy Spirit's presence, the first sign that He is having His own way with a man's heart.[1]

¶ These two words, joy and peace, furnish the *colour* of the Christian life. The prevailing hue of most lives—it cannot be called colour—is grey if it be not drab. The clear skies out of which a wreath of light is continually transfiguring the whole landscape belong to more favourable climates than that of Great Britain. The deep glow of sunset, rich in purple, orange, crimson, and amethystine hues that have no names, appears but seldom and is soon gone. In a sense this is to be expected of spiritual life in a naughty world. The moods of the soul are sure to change, and nothing is more monotonous or exhausting than the uninterrupted glare of a pitiless Eastern sun. But religious life that has no colour has lost the secret of beauty and charm, and perhaps there is no feature in the Christian religion that would do more to convince a weary, cynical, *blasé* generation of the supernatural power of the grace of God than the fadeless colour it can infuse into a Christian life by the joy and peace which are the fruit of the Divine Spirit.[2]

5. The second triad is "longsuffering, kindness, goodness." All these three obviously refer to the spiritual life in its manifestations to men.

[1] Bishop Francis Paget.

[2] W. T. Davison, *The Indwelling Spirit*, 112.

(1) *Longsuffering.*—How striking that this should come next! After dwelling upon the great dispositions of love in God, joy in God, peace in God, it is almost startling to be encountered by this sober grace, longsuffering. It is as though, when we turn to the Word, the first great necessity is the power of bearing up and holding out. It is something more than magnanimity; it is rather *longanimity*. It is not breadth of temper so much as length of temper. It is the capacity to present the same calm surface to men to-day, and to-morrow, and morrow after morrow, in spite of anything and everything. It is the power to bear irritating people without becoming irritated. It is the ability to tolerate even the intolerant. It is long temper as contrasted with short temper; the power of "bearing all things."

¶ Some of us meet injustice, wrong treatment, harshness, rudeness, unkindness, from those among whom we live and work. It is not easy to keep our hearts sweet and loving all the while in such experiences. It is easier for us to do as the world does—harden ourselves against the injustice or rudeness, or grow bitter, resentful, soured. That is what too many do in the midst of the selfishness, harshness, and wrong they meet in their condition. But this is not the transforming that is toward Christ-likeness. The struggle between the good and the evil in us goes on continually; but when the world is getting the better of us, when the good in us is being smothered, when the lamp within our bosom is being quenched, when its flame is growing dimmer, we are losing in the struggle. Instead of being transformed, our life is being darkened.[1]

(2) *Gentleness.*—How exquisite the addition! We are not merely to bear the impatience and the intolerableness of the world; we are to be delicate in our approaches to it. The literal significance is just this: we are to "graze" people, to touch them slightly, but the touch has to be one of healing. If we want to know the meaning of the gentle touch, we must read Paul's Epistles to the Thessalonians, and mark the exquisite gentleness of his reproofs. "He touched upon it so tenderly!" Ah, that is a rare fruit, and it comes in the life that is united by love and joy to God.

¶ Writing to Southey, whom he urged to undertake a "life" of John Wesley, Sir Walter Scott says: When I was twelve years

[1] J. R. Miller.

old, I heard him preach more than once, standing on a chair, in Kelso churchyard. He was a most venerable figure, but his sermons were vastly too colloquial for the taste of Saunders. He told many excellent stories. One I remember, which he said had happened to him at Edinburgh. "A drunken dragoon," said Wesley, "was commencing an assertion in military fashion, G—d eternally d—n me, just as I was passing. I touched the poor man on the shoulder, and when he turned round fiercely, said calmly, 'You mean *God bless you.*'" In the mode of telling the story he failed not to make us sensible how much his patriarchal appearance, and mild yet bold rebuke, overawed the soldier, who touched his hat, thanked him, and, I think, came to chapel that evening.[1]

(3) *Goodness.*—More positive still is the grace! All the wealth accumulated in love and joy and peace in God is to be poured out in active, influential ministry upon our fellowmen. If we would realize the full wealthy content of this word "goodness" in all its reach and ranges, we must call to our aid that fascinating list of words beginning with the syllable "bene." In goodness, we find benediction, benevolence, beneficence, benefits. It is a thoroughly ripe fruit, and its juices allay the pains and fears of men, and help to keep souls pure and sweet.

¶ From what has been said, it is easy to see how genuinely good my father was. The goodness which St. Paul mentions as a component part of "the fruit of the Spirit" (Gal. v. 22, 23), and which, difficult as it is to dissect and define, we instinctively recognize when we see it, characterized him in a very high degree. Yes, he was good—thoroughly, genuinely, unaffectedly, transparently good. This was the clear-cut, ineffaceable impression he left upon the minds of all who knew him, however partial and imperfect their knowledge of him might be. Those who knew him best were most sensible of his goodness; in the intimacies of private life, it showed itself even more fully and winsomely than in his public relations and activities. When once my elder sister was travelling with him in America, their kind host in one city gathered a party of friends for a picnic at Niagara Falls. Powerfully moved by the majesty of the scene, my father suggested that they should turn aside to a secluded spot for a few moments of prayer. The prayer over, the party were again moving on, when my sister suddenly clasped the arm of the gentleman at her side, and earnestly exclaimed, "Oh, isn't my father good?" "Yes, indeed he is," said he. "Ah," she rejoined, "but it is only we who

[1] J. G. Lockhart, *Life of Sir Walter Scott*, ch. xliv.

live with him who know how good he is." The daughterly tribute was the simple truth. It has happened before now that a man has been, in the strong line of the poet,

A household devil and a causeway saint.

Never was there any such contradiction between what my father seemed to the world and what he was in reality at home. There were no skeletons in his cupboards, no hidden chambers in his life into which he would have been afraid for any one to enter. To the very core of him, he was a good man, courteous, sympathetic, considerate, one of "God's gentlemen," known as such by all his friends; and not even his enemies—and inevitably he made some enemies for righteousness' sake—ever brought his goodness into doubt.[1]

6. The third triad—"faithfulness, meekness, temperance"—appears to point to the world in which the Christian life is to be lived as a scene of difficulties and oppositions. The rendering of the Revised Version is to be preferred to that of the Authorized in the first of the three, for it is not faith in its theological sense to which the Apostle is here referring. St. Paul's thought is that the Christian life is to manifest itself in the faithful discharge of all duties and the honest handling of all things committed to it. Meekness even more distinctly contemplates a condition of things which is contrary to the Christian life, and points to a submissiveness of spirit which does not lift itself up against opposition, but bends like a reed before the storm. St. Paul preached meekness and practised it; but he could flash into strong opposition and with a resonant ring in his voice could say, "To whom we gave place by subjection, No! not for an hour." The last member of the triad—temperance—points to the difficulties which the spiritual life is apt to meet with in the natural passions and desires, and insists upon the fact that conflict and rigid and habitual self-control are sure to be marks of that life.

¶ The power of self-control is one of the great qualities that differentiate man from the lower animals. He is the only animal capable of a moral struggle or a moral conquest. Every step in the progress of the world has been a new "control"; it has been escaping from the tyranny of a fact to the understanding and mastery of that fact. For ages man looked in terror at the lightning-flash; to-day he has begun to understand it as electricity, a force he has mastered and made his slave. The million phases

[1] H. Varley, *Henry Varley's Life-Story*, 238.

of electrical invention are but manifestations of our control over a great force. But the greatest of all "control" is self-control. Self-denial and self-control are the necessary postulates of all moral excellence. A man who will take the world easily will never take it grandly. To lie in the lap of luxury may be the highest enjoyment of which a feeble character is capable, but a strong man must have something difficult to do. Moreover, the happiness of the human race does not consist in our being devoid of passions, but in our learning to control them. It has been well said that in any discussion or disagreement with another, if you are in the wrong, you cannot afford to lose your temper; and if you are in the right there is no occasion to. Or, as a lawyer has wittily put it, "Possession is nine parts of the law, self-possession is ten."[1]

¶ Spenser sings the prowess of Sir Guion, and Holbein draws a picture of the Faithful Knight, who in every line of his figure, every muscle of his body, every detail of his mien and armour, bespeaks the man that is fit to rule others because he can rule himself. Self-control comes last in St. Paul's list, not because it is least, or lowest, but because it is the bond of all the rest. Many men attain a good measure of self-control by effort, and none can gain the grace without effort, strenuous and constant. But he who would master himself completely and maintain his control to the end finds that this "temperance" is a gift of the Spirit. "Thee o'er thyself I crown and mitre," said Virgil to Dante, but only when he had triumphantly passed the seven terraces of Purgatory. Man need not wait till then for such high coronation, but the only man who can conquer himself is he in whom the Divine Spirit exercises complete control and sway.[2]

These thoughts were mine—to dwell alone,
My spirit on its lordly throne,
Hating the vain stir, fierce and loud,
The din of the tumultuous crowd;
And how I thought to arm my soul,
And stablish it in self-control;
And said I would obey the right,
And would be strong in wisdom's might,
And bow unto my own heart's law,
And keep my heart from speck or flaw,
That in its mirror I might find
A reflex of the Eternal mind.[3]

[1] John Stuart Blackie. [2] W. T. Davison, *The Indwelling Spirit*, 115.
[3] R. C. Trench, *Justin Martyr*.

## III.

### The Culture of the Fruit.

1. The production of this fruit is the end to be aimed at. The "fruit" is the climax of the tree's operations. For this it braves the blasts of many a wild and stormy night; for this it endures biting frosts of winter, and presents its bare, denuded boughs to snow and sleet; for this it opens its bud in the spring-time, and spreads its verdant leaves before the summer sun; for this it sucks up acids from the soil, and labours to provide itself with carbon from the surrounding atmosphere. This is the end of all its labours, the aim of the year's toil, the climax of all its operations.

"By their fruits ye shall know them." Just in the manifestation of these characteristic virtues in their union does the world recognize the supremacy of the Christian religion. Do what it will, it cannot produce the like. The recrudescence of startling spiritual gifts or materialistic miracles, for which so many are sighing, would not greatly impress the present sceptical and cynical age. The modern Egyptian magicians would be able to emulate the wonders of the modern Moses. But genuine Christian character—loving, cheerful, calm, forbearing, considerate, genuine, trustworthy, unassuming, self-controlled—they cannot, and know they cannot, produce. "But here is the finger of God, a flash of the will that can"; and seeing it, they confess that God is of a truth among us.

¶ There is always danger of misrepresentation in the attempt to present a view that is not one's own; but it does seem clear that those who deny the Divinity of Christ must think that the Christian character was introduced and realized and propagated and maintained under strangely incongruous and uncongenial conditions. It certainly does not look like a character that has started up out of an enthusiastic delusion, an exaggerated and misguided devotion, a fanatical misunderstanding of a teacher's meaning, a credulous fostering of irrational hopes and fancies; still less can the thought of it be brought into connexion with any wilful or self-deceiving fraud. For it is not out of such darkness and disorder, by the working of natures so perverse and unhealthy and unreasonable, that such a type of moral excellence as this could spring up and endure—a type in which humanity attains its best harmony and strength, and renders its most

reasonable service. The sobriety and usefulness of the Christian character; its quiet and wide attractiveness; its readiness for adaptation to new demands and opportunities in shifting circumstances and strange countries; its peculiar balance and blending of traits which are generally found apart, and thought to stand in contrast; its steady health and freshness; its hidden stores of strength and charm and wisdom and refreshment; its power to help all men at all times;—these are distinctive qualities which seem to thrust away the suggestion of an origin in delusion, or misunderstanding, or extravagance, and to claim for the character that bears them a direct line of kindred with some perfect type of manhood, some true idea of what man might and should be, some thought about him in the mind of God.[1]

2. We ought to manifest this fruit in its most favourable and attractive form, so that others may be tempted to try its sweet taste. The apple seeds are encased in a thick, pleasant-tasting mass of juicy substance; the pear and the plum, too; and these fruits are tinted with the most beautiful hues; while the seeds of the strawberry are raised on to a cone-shaped, richly-coloured mass of delicious and tempting food material, and the individual seeds of the raspberry are clothed in a ruddy coat of luscious matter. What is the reason for all this? It is simply that birds and animals may be attracted to them—tempted to eat them, and this in order that the seeds may be more widely disseminated. So the fruit of the Spirit should be presented to men in such a form that, so far from being repelled by it as they too often are at present, they would be attracted to it, and tempted to taste it for themselves. Our love, our joy, our peace should be shown to them in such a way that it will win their admiration, and, tasting it, the seed will sink into their own soul, and again bring forth fruit to God's glory.

¶ Everything about McCheyne drew men Christward. More than most, he was the living epistle, signed with the King's autograph and sealed by His Spirit. It was with him as with young Sir Pelleas; they who met him wondered after him,

> because his face
> Shone like the countenance of a priest of old
> Against the flame about a sacrifice
> Kindled by fire from heaven.[2]

[1] Francis Paget, *Studies in the Christian Character.*
[2] A. Smellie, *Robert Murray McCheyne*, 204.

¶ Drummond's sympathy, his leisure from himself, his strength, won the confidence of anxious inquirers at Mr. Moody's evangelistic meetings, as his personal charm on the platform had first stirred their hope; and he thus became acquainted with the secrets of hundreds of lives. Men felt he was not a voice merely, but a friend, and on his arm they were lifted up. He was always hopeful about the most hopeless, picked out some good points in the worst, and sent a man away feeling that he was trusted once more, not only by this friend, but by Christ, by God. The affection which such treatment aroused was extraordinary. I have seen numbers of letters, commonplace enough but for the intense love and gratitude which they breathe, and which sometimes approaches worship. It was such power as was possessed by some of the greatest of the mediæval saints—and he was not twenty-four. One man said to me only the other day, "Since Drummond died I have not been able to help praying to him."

Mr. R. R. Simpson sends the following: "At an inquiry meeting in the Assembly Hall I spoke to a bright looking young man, and found that he had decided for Christ. On my asking him what led him to decision, the striking answer was, 'It was the way Mr. Drummond laid his hand on my shoulder and looked me in the face that led me to Christ.'"[1]

3. The fruits of the spirit are perfectly spontaneous. "Against such there is no law." Is this an example of St. Paul's irony? The clause may be read as a supreme example of ironical speech. Rather perhaps it is added to show the Christian's true relation to law, the victory which the spirit gains just because the law is not painfully toiled after, not punctiliously performed, but easily and supremely transcended. The Galatians, led astray by Judaizers, were being brought again into bondage by ceremonies and restrictions, and were fast losing the secret of Christian freedom. Law not only cannot condemn these fruits of the Spirit; it cannot produce anything of the kind, any more than a machine could fashion a lily.

Neither God nor man will condemn these fruits of the Spirit. God will not, for they are the fruits of His own Divine Spirit working within the soul of man. Law will never be against the eternally right and fitting, and these fruits of the Spirit are to be placed in such high orderings. For God to condemn these fruits of the Spirit would be for God to condemn Himself, to go contrary

[1] G. A. Smith, *Life of Henry Drummond*, 98.

to His own Divine and glorious nature, to overturn the balance and ruin the arrangement of the moral universe. Man will not condemn. There is no court on earth, in either barbarous or civilized nations, where a man could be summoned and condemned for being joyful, peaceful, longsuffering, good, meek, gentle. Wicked men hate the good and plot for their condemnation and destruction; but the good are never summoned to the bar of justice on account of goodness, meekness, gentleness.

¶ I remember some words of Socrates, shortly before he drank the cup of hemlock. In his cell in Athens, he awoke one morning, and there was a friend at his bedside. He asked what news there was, and his friend told him that everything had been arranged for his escape, and that he must flee. But the brave man refused. "No," he answered Crito, "unless the law releases me, I stay. It protected my birth, my growth, my education, my marriage, my whole life. It now commands my death. If I broke it, I should be haunted by its angry ghost for ever." So law encompasses me like an atmosphere. It remains with me always. If I break it, it will haunt me for ever. But I meet its requirements, not, as Socrates did, by dying myself. There is a better way. The death of the Son of God is available for me. I flee to it and to Him. And now law is the fortress which shelters, and not the sword which smites.[1]

¶ Of course, developing his own thoughts and life freely, he was charged by his opponents with faithlessness to the Church and with latitudinarian opinions. But he rejoiced in finding within the Church of England room to expand his soul, and freedom for his intellect. If the latter part of the accusation was true, and he was latitudinarian in opinion, it is at least remarkable that he should have induced, in those who heard him profitably, not only a spiritual life, but also a high and punctilious morality. His hearers kept the Law all the better for being freed from the Law. And many a working man in Brighton, many a business man in London, many a young officer, many a traveller upon the Continent, many a one living in the great world of politics or in the little world of fashion, can trace back to words heard in Trinity Chapel the creation in them of a loftier idea of moral action, and an abiding influence which has made their lives, in all their several spheres if not religious, at least severely moral.[2]

[1] A. Smellie, *In the Secret Place*, 349.

[2] Stopford A. Brooke, *Life and Letters of F. W. Robertson*, 479.

# Burdens

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## Burdens.

**Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ.—Gal. vi. 2.**
**For each man shall bear his own burden.—Gal. vi. 5.**

The key-note of this Epistle, the key-note of Christianity, is struck in these two sentences. They seem to express a contradiction, but it is not really so. If we take them together they are a brief description of the essence of our religion; a definition, in short compass, of the spirit of the Christian life. For the Christian faith is based upon two great underlying principles which, though not strictly original to it, are yet, in their passionate expression, among the most precious of its gifts to man. They explain at once the mystery and comprehensiveness of its scheme of salvation for the individual soul; and also the Divine beauty and eternal reality of that great ideal of the Church as the Kingdom of God, a community of souls in which each individual member must bear his own burden, while all the members are bound together, bearing one another's burdens, and united in Him who is the great Burden-bearer of humanity, who is the Head of the body, even Christ.

It is impossible to obey one part of this law without obeying the other; it is impossible to bear our own burden, without at the same time bearing the burden of others; it is impossible to realize the awful responsibilities of being, without at the same time realizing the claims of our brothers; impossible to find our own true life without giving up our individual will, without merging our personal interests in those of the human brotherhood.

So we have—

I. The Individual Burden.
II. The Mutual Burden.
III. The Law that Lightens the Burden.

## I.

### The Individual Burden.

**"Every man shall bear his own burden."**

1. When St. Paul says, "Every man shall bear his own burden," he is speaking of the burdens which no man can transfer from his own shoulders to those of another, burdens which from the very nature of things he must bear, and not another. And he uses a word that carries this meaning. It is the word used by classical writers when speaking of a soldier's kit. St. Luke uses it in the Acts when speaking of the lading of a ship. And our Lord uses it when He says, "My burden is light." In all these cases the idea is that of a burden which cannot be got rid of. A soldier on active service must carry his own knapsack, or he is not fit to be a soldier. A merchantman must carry her own lading, or she may as well be broken up. A Christian must bear the burden of Christ, whatever that burden may be, or he cannot be a Christian. There are, then, certain burdens which a man must himself bear, which he cannot transfer from his own shoulders to those of another—which another cannot carry.

¶ How many people cunningly and persistently contrive to shift their burden to the shoulders of their neighbours! They are not particular as to whom they saddle with their duty and care, but they determine to bear as little of it themselves as is possible. In youth somebody must fag for them; they treat their friend as a valet; their public life is parasitical; as husband or wife, they shuffle the whole weight of responsibility on their partner. The ingenuity of the ignoble to make themselves comfortable at other people's expense is no small part of the comedy and tragedy of human life. How different the spirit of Christ! Let me manfully accept my own burden; and then, by thought, sympathy, influence, and substantial aid, let me lighten the burden of my neighbour. My Master was the great burden bearer of the race. Let me drink in His spirit and follow in His steps.[1]

2. In creating man God has laid firm and deep the foundations of individual character and of individual life. There is no individuality in the case of a flock of sheep or a herd of cattle

[1] W. L. Watkinson, *The Gates of Dawn*, 24.

Doubtless no two sheep are exactly alike, and the shepherd knows the difference between them, however alike they may appear to the superficial; but there is no individual consciousness and no individual life. One primrose is like another primrose. It is a pity that this one should fade, but another will spring up in its place, and the hedgerow will be none the worse. But in the case of men God has laid firm and deep the foundations of individual character, individual condition, individual responsibility, and individual destiny. So it comes to pass that of two children born of the same stock, playing in the same nursery, brought up very largely with the same education and surroundings, each possesses his own individual character from the outset, sometimes in a fashion which puzzles parents who study their children closely; and, as soon as moral responsibility begins, each one begins of necessity to shape his own character, to choose his own course, to mark out his own path, and very largely to fashion his own destiny. And the burdens each one has to bear are those belonging to his individual lot.

¶ Perhaps the most prominent Secession divine in Aberdeen who was a contemporary of Dr. Kidd was James Templeton, minister of what is now Belmont Street U.P. Church. He was a man of quiet power and singular shrewdness of observation. His mother wit, spiritual fervour, homely illustration, and unabashed vernacular gave him acceptance with the people. One Sabbath, speaking to persons who complained that their burdens in life were exceptionally heavy, he said—"Suppose now you were to take all your separate burdens to the Castlegate and drop them doon there, and after examinin' them and comparin' them one with another, I am thinkin' you wouldna be willin' to exchange with any when you really saw what they were; but, pickin' up your bit bundlie, each one of you wad gang awa' hame mair contentit than when you went to the Castlegate."[1]

(1) There is the burden of *physical disability or disfigurement*, such as lameness, blindness, or deformity of any sort—always a very grievous burden to be borne. St. Paul knew this burden, the shame and the sorrow of it. Apparently he suffered from some distressing physical evil that made him contemptible in the eyes of men and that injured even his ministerial usefulness. Some, indeed, have held that the thorn in the flesh was a moral weak-

[1] James Stark, *Dr. Kidd of Aberdeen*, 140.

ness—a violent temper, a jealous nature, even a lustful passion. But no man ever received grace to bear these things, though thousands have received grace to get rid of them. The facts that the thorn was not removed and that grace was given him to bear it show conclusively that it could not have been a moral weakness but rather a physical defect, a disease. And there are thousands in the world to-day, like him, who have to bear unaided and alone the burden of physical weakness or deformity save for that Divine grace which helps them to overcome the shame and to endure the pain.

¶ In one of Schiller's poems a beautiful story is told to this effect: When God made the birds He gave them gorgeous plumage and sweet voices, but no wings. He laid wings on the ground and said, "Take these burdens and bear them." They struggled along with them, folding them over their hearts. Presently the wings grew fast to their breasts and spread themselves out, and they found that what they had thought were burdens were changed to pinions.[1]

(2) There is the burden of *intellectual weakness*. Men have not all the same mental powers, the same facility in acquiring learning, the same range of vision, the same foresight. One man succeeds in life because he has a greater power of forecasting the future, of calculating the changes in the money market, or industrial life, than his neighbour. The race is perhaps not always to the swift, but it generally is. The battle is not always to the strong, but it generally is. And in the race of human life a man, notwithstanding all his diligence and probity, may find himself outdistanced by one of keener intellect and greater foresight. He may think it hard that it should be so, but he must bear the burden of his own defects as best he may.

I would gladly bear your burden,
If it might be so,
But each heart its own must carry;
None may go
Altogether free, you know.

If I might, it would be easy,
O my friend, for me
Just to take your task and do it,
But, you see,
Such a thing could never be.

[1] A. T. Pierson.

Though my heart aches, as I watch you,
Toiling through the day—
Missing some of life's old sunshine
From your way—
Finding work instead of play—

Yet I know that it is better—
Know that you and I,
Looking back from God's to-morrow,
By and by—
Never more shall question "Why?"

By our losses He is leading
To eternal gain:
He will surely give us sunshine,
After rain—
Calm for sorrow—peace for pain.[1]

(3) It may be some permanent or far-reaching *consequence of a former act* of our own; some neglect, or recklessness, or sin in the past, which has hung a weight about our necks. The sin may be repented of; the pardon may be assured. But the temporal consequences of the sin remain, and will remain so long as we have breath. This is the most irksome and the most painful form which a man's individual burden can take. If you thrust a knife into your arm, it does not affect me. You yourself feel the pain; you yourself must endure the agony. I may sympathize, I may pity, I may bandage the gash, but the severed flesh and the lacerated fibres are yours, and along your nerves nature telegraphs the pain. So it is with the soul. A man who stabs himself with a bad habit, who opens the arteries of his higher life with the lancet of his passions and drains them of the vital fluid, who inserts his head within the noose of appetite and swings himself off from the pedestal of his self-control, must endure the suffering, the weakness, and the loss which are the issue of his insane conduct.

¶ Sin is often described by active and aggressive metaphors—it is a deceiver, a destroyer, an enemy, etc. This passive one is more dreadful, for it tells simply of the dead weight of fact. Facts are "chiels that winna ding." Sin is, to Paul, "this dead

[1] Edith H. Divall, *A Believer's Rest*, 78.

body"; and the flaccid mass of inelastic flesh, at once soft and heavy, is horrible enough without the implied hint of decay. The worst thing about sin is just that it is there—an irrevocable fact which the sinner has put there. When he realizes this he feels it as a burden: he cannot sleep, or eat, or work, or play as once he did. Yet that is a precious pain. The far deeper danger is that one should grow accustomed to it, as the Swiss peasant to the growing load of hay or Milo to his ox, until he is able complacently to "draw iniquity with a cart rope." The unblushed-for past—the dead weight of sinful facts faced deliberately and carried lightly—that is a doom far deeper than the most oppressive load.[1]

3. Now St. Paul does not say that the burden shall be lifted from off our shoulders, or that it shall be borne for us, but that we shall be sustained in carrying it. If it is God's gift, it is His will that we should keep it, at least for the time. There is some blessing in it for us, and it would not be kindness to us for God to take it away, even at our earnest pleading. It is part of our life, and is essential to our best growth. This is true of duty; however hard it is, to relieve us of it would be to rob us of the opportunity for reaching larger usefulness. It is true of struggle; all nobleness and strength of character come out of conflict. It is true of suffering; it is God's cleansing fire, and to miss it would be a sore loss to us. Hence, while God never fails us in need, He loves us too well to relieve us of weights which are essential to our best growth and to the largest fruitfulness of our life. He does not take the load from our shoulder, but instead He puts strength in us to enable us to carry the burden, and thus grow strong. This is the secret of the peace of many a sick-room. It is the secret of the deep, quiet joy we see oft-times in the home of sorrow.

¶ The seal of one of those Scottish Covenanters whom Claverhouse imprisoned on the lonely Bass Rock reads "Sub pondere cresco"—"I grow beneath the load."[2]

Thy burden is God's gift,
And it will make the bearer calm and strong;
Yet, lest it press too heavily and long,
He says, "Cast it on Me,
And it shall easy be."

[1] John Kelman, *The Road*, i. 3.

[2] A. Smellie, *In the Hour of Silence*.

And those who heed His voice,
And seek to give it back in trustful prayer,
Have quiet hearts that never can despair,
And hope lights up the way
Upon the darkest day.

It is the lonely road
That crushes out the light and life of heaven;
But borne with Him, the soul restored, forgiven,
Sings out through all the days
Her joy and God's high praise.[1]

## II.

### The Mutual Burden.

**"Bear ye one another's burdens."**

1. The Greek word for burden in this verse might be better rendered by "load," for the idea is that of an adventitious and heavy burden. A man's family is, in a certain sense, a burden—a burden that arises from his being a husband and a father—but it is not a burden of which he can rid himself. To him it is a light burden, as to the Christian Christ's burden is light. But to this burden there may be added the burden of ill-health, or misfortune, or poverty. It is not in any one's power to say to him, "I am to take up your burden. You shall no longer be weighted down with your family. You shall no longer be a husband. You shall no longer be a father. Your duties as husband and father shall no longer oppress you." We cannot say that. We might, indeed, remove his children from him, but that would not in any degree lessen his duty to care for them and train them and teach them and act a father's part towards them. If we wish to help him it is his load, not his burden, we must bear—the crushing weight of poverty, or misfortune, or sorrow.

2. This burden-bearing means a different thing in each life. It is not a pretty sentiment, a mere figure of speech. It is the great and manifold service of love, which needs all the wisdom and strength and patience that we can bring to it, and which can be wrought in a thousand ways. Occasionally this burden-bearing

[1] J. R. Miller.

can be done very literally when we can take on to our own shoulders for the bearing, and into our own hands for the doing, that which for another was too heavy and too hard. But more frequently it must take the form of the indirect and mediate service of sympathy. In the great league of pity and help to which we are all called, and in which, if only we are unselfish enough, we can all find a place, we ever find that the best thing we have to give to the world is our influence. No man liveth to himself. Every man is ever adding to or diminishing the burden of other lives. There is an infinitude of interaction—much of it beyond our tracing; and in so far as we carry through life a cheerful, patient, responsive, and unselfish spirit we shall be doing something every day to make the burden of others easier to be borne.

¶ Dr. Bell's desire for sympathy, and his appreciation of it was touchingly intense, and yet he had a way of looking and speaking with almost flippant unconcern when feeling most deeply. This was at times when he knew that any display of emotion would "upset everything." Thus many people who knew him well saw little of his inner self. They saw him as the hope-inspiring physician, smiling and chatting, cheering the sorrowful, soothing the sufferer, quick to see fun lurking near solemnity, taking up the burden of others with seemingly no burden of his own, bringing a gay good humour to meet anxious doubts and dreadful fears. When young, his bearing was that of a joyous nature on whom the gods had showered their good gifts. Even in later years when many bereavements had wounded his warm affections to the quick his smile was ready, and his sense of fun as fresh as ever. His self-control was perfect.[1]

¶ The late Right Hon. W. H. Smith, when First Lord of the Admiralty, was leaving his office one afternoon, when his secretary, seeing him packing up a number of letters and other Government papers, asked him to leave them and have them forwarded to him by post as other Ministers did. "No," was the answer, "the fact is our postman has plenty to carry. I watched him one morning coming up the approach, and I determined to save him as much as I could."[2]

(1) By the giving of sympathy you take away the worst weight of *sorrow*. You cannot take it all away, but you can lift off that

[1] *Joseph Bell: An Appreciation*, 34.
[2] *The Morning Watch*, 1894, p. 10.

in it which maims the life or slays the soul, if you love enough. Unloving sympathy has no tact, no inventiveness, no insight, no reverence. But the sympathy of love—and *that* you are bound to win, if you would obey this law—enters into the sanctuary of another's sorrow with uncovered head and reverent stillness, sees the point where tenderness can touch and not hurt, has quickness of imagination to invent the means of bearing away the burden; rescues the sufferers before they are conscious of being rescued, and wins undying love. There is no happiness in life so delicate and pure as the doing of this beautiful thing. It is the happiness of God Himself.

(2) *Joy* may for the moment be as great a burden as sorrow. The heart may be o'erfraught with delight, and nigh to breaking with it. When Lear awoke from his madness and saw Cordelia bending over him, and love in her eyes, he all but died of joy. We have no right, but have great wrong, if we treat with indifference the joy of the child or the rapture of youth. "They want no sympathy," we say, or even with a scoff, "He is happy! let him alone!" Have we never repulsed young or old with a cold look when they came up full of their delight, longing for us to share their pleasure? It is an unkindly act; let us never do it again. Let us think rather that joy is a burden that you have to bear for others. Make the delight of others brighter by sympathy. Do not blow with a cold wind upon the rose in flower, lest you wither its leaves. "Rejoice," said St. Paul, with his large knowledge of the needs of love, "rejoice with them that do rejoice."

3. Different temperaments, like different plants, require different atmospheres. Some plants require a tropical heat before they will put on their beautiful garments. We have to create about them a mimic summer, and delude them into feeling that they are far away, at home in the burning clime. Other plants seek for our own temperate heat; they disburse their treasure, not to the soft calling of the luxurious breeze of the tropics, but to the robust, bracing, toughening winds of our own land. How we have to humour the plants if we would lure them out into blossoms and flower! This one must be set a little farther in the shade. That one must be lifted up into the light, to receive the baptism of the sun. Each one must be placed accord-

ing to its temperament. And when vices cling about them in the shape of destructive little parasites, little insects which grow fat by draining up the sap, then how we have to medicate the atmosphere, to provide certain conditions which shall help the plants to deal with their enemies, and to throw off the burdens! Thus we create suitable conditions for individual plants; and thus we must create suitable conditions for the full and beautiful growth of individual men.

¶ Looking back over these two years of illness, it is impossible not to be struck by the calmness and fortitude with which that illness was met. There were moments of terrible depression and of disappointment and of grief. It was not easy for him to give up ambition, to leave so many projects unfulfilled, so much work undone. But to him this illness grew to be a mount of purification,

> Ove l'umano spirito si purga,
> E di salire al ciel diventa degno.

More and more there grew on him a deepening sense of the goodness of God. No one had ever suffered more from the Eclipse of Faith, no one had ever been more honest in dealing with himself and with his difficulties. The change that came over his mental attitude may seem almost incredible to those who knew him only as a scientific man; it does not seem so to the few who knew anything of his inner life. To them the impression given is, not of an enemy changed into a friend, antagonism altered into submission; rather is it of one who for long has been bearing a heavy burden on his shoulders bravely and patiently, and who at last has had it lifted from him, and lifted so gradually that he could not tell the exact moment when he found it gone, and himself standing, like the Pilgrim of the never-to-be-forgotten story, at the foot of the Cross, and Three Shining Ones coming to greet him.[1]

## III.

### The Law that Lightens the Burden.

**"And so fulfil the law of Christ."**

Here the Apostle directs his readers from the law given on stone to the law which should be written on the heart, from the

[1] *Life and Letters of George John Romanes*, 351.

Mount of Sinai to the Mount of Beatitudes, from the law of the letter which killeth to the law of the Spirit which giveth life. There can be little doubt that the Apostle's words here were suggested by the controversy which had been raging in the Galatian Church.

The Galatians who were the object of St. Paul's attention had been showing much more interest in the outward marks of religion than in its inward power. They had come under the spell of that view which made religion a matter of rite and ritual, and here the Apostle would have them learn that such a view was altogether a mistake. Like his fellow-Apostle, he could enforce the truth that pure religion before God and the Father was not a matter of circumcision or of outward ordinances. It did not consist of attendances at synagogue at the proper hour or of keeping the feasts in all their strictness. Pure religion was something more than these. It was to visit the fatherless and the widows in their affliction, and to keep oneself unspotted from the world.

1. This law is founded on the necessities of our human nature. It is not necessary to obey it because it is commanded; it is commanded because it is necessary. It fits into the wants of man. For we are all dependent on one another. As in our body each organ lives for itself only in living for the rest, as each part, even each atom, of our frame supplements the wants of the others, gives and receives, bears and forbears, dies and lives alternately for the life of the whole—so is it in the ever living body of humanity. The life of each nation, each society, each man, depends on the mutual giving and receiving, dying and living, bearing and forbearing of all the rest. So the moment we, through selfishness of life, divide ourselves from this living and dying for others, the moment we isolate ourselves, we pronounce our own sentence of death. The absolute loss of love is eternal death, as its absolute gain is eternal life. It was that Christ Jesus saw; it was that He proclaimed on Calvary. And it is the law of the life of the universe. Therefore, "bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ."

To bear the burdens of others might well have seemed to St. Paul a dictate of the intuitive moral consciousness, and might

well have been commanded by him on the ground of that inward intuition. But this is not the ground on which St. Paul commands it; he appeals to a positive historical authority, which he calls "the law of Christ"; and he asks men to bear the burdens of others, not because that precept was written in their hearts, but because it had been given by Him who was the object of their worship. In writing to these Galatians, wavering as they were between Christianity and Judaism, he evidently speaks of the law of Christ in contradistinction to the law of Moses. It is as if he had said, "Do not think that, in coming from Judaism to Christianity, you are passing from a region of positive certainty into a world of mystic obscurity; we too have a historic Lawgiver, who has uttered His voice from the mount of God, and who speaks with an authority which Moses never wielded. You have received from Moses only the negative precept—the command not to hurt your brother; we offer you a law of Christ which commands you to identify your brother's interests with your own—'Bear ye one another's burdens.'"

¶ When Dr. Temple resigned the headmastership of Rugby to become Bishop of Exeter, his farewell sermon to the boys was from the text, "Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ." "This new commandment of Christ," said the preacher, "this law of love which Paul is here referring to, our Lord and the Apostles place above all other commandments. How is this? The older dispensation had placed the fear and love of God first, then the love of neighbours. Surely the highest rule must be to love first God, then truth, holiness, justice, and after these one another. Has the Gospel sunk below the law? No, for under the Gospel, by the incarnation of the Son of God, the two loves are united, can no longer be kept apart. There can be no love of God apart from love of man. Christ Himself has pointed out this love of each other as the special mode by which He would have us acknowledge Him. Let us help one another, then, at our Lord's call, by courage, by patience, by cordial and tender sympathy in joy and sorrow, by faithful warning, by resignation. There are no bounds to the help which spirit can give to spirit in the intercourse of a noble life. When parted, we can still bear one another's burdens by hearty, mutual trust. There is nothing which gives more firmness and constancy to the life of a man than loyal trust in absent friends."[1]

[1] *Frederick Temple, Archbishop of Canterbury*, i. 238.

2. The bearing of our own burden in a Christian spirit prepares us for lifting the load of other people. Every experience carries with it the power of bearing a burden. Have you never passed through times when your own religious faith was at stake? Then how tenderly you can enter into the mental struggle of others. Have you never known the trouble of making both ends meet? Then you will sympathize with the burdens of those who dare not be generous, because, by God's grace, they will first be just. Have you known what it is to go to your business, while some dear child was lying, like alabaster, in the sleep of death, and you had to keep down your feelings while you won life's daily bread? Then how you can feel for others who have left their hearts in the great death-chamber with the closed door.

While it is true that by bearing our own burdens we learn best how to bear other people's, the converse is no less true. There is no help towards bearing our own burdens so effective as the bearing the burdens of others as well. This is the moral paradox of our being. Are we sinking under the weight of our own burden? Then let us go up to our neighbour, and courageously shoulder his also. The two will be lighter, incomparably lighter, than the one was. Is not this demonstrably true? Is a man's heart wounded and bleeding with some recent sorrow—a cruel bereavement, a disappointed hope, an outraged affection; and he broods over it until the pain becomes too terrible to bear? The only relief for his agony is found in ministering to the wants or consoling the sorrows of another. His sympathy is thus evoked; and with sympathy come new interests, new feelings, a new life.

Sad souls, that harbour fears and woes
In many a haunted breast,
Turn but to meet your lowly Lord,
And He will give you rest.

Into His commonwealth alike
Are ills and blessings thrown;
Bear ye your neighbours' burdens; lo!
Their ease shall be your own.

Yield only up His price, your heart,
Into God's loving hold;
He turns with heavenly alchemy,
Your lead of life to gold.

Some needful pangs endure in peace,
Nor yet for freedom pant;
He cuts the bane you cleave to off,
Then gives the boon you want.[1]

¶ Describing David Hill's itinerant tours in China, one of the missionaries, the Rev. T. Protheroe, says, "I venture to add an incident which occurred on one of our journeys. He had a servant in training for the work of an evangelist. The servant had given over a bundle of rugs, which served as Mr. Hill's bedding, to an old man who escorted us, and showed evident unwillingness to bear any share even in relieving the old man of his burden. It was a hot day. One word from Mr. Hill would have been enough, but he preferred to teach the much-needed lesson in another way, and said he should carry the bundle himself. Of course, I objected, and there was some dispute as to which of us should bear the burden but he won the day in the end by saying, 'Do let me have it; I want to teach him humility.'"[2]

3. The measure of our love to one another must be the love that Christ showed to us. It is an infinite measure. There is no one who can say, "I have done enough for my brother man. I have loved enough." Beyond our most eager efforts stretches the ever-expanding loving-kindness of Jesus. There is no one who can say, "I have forgiven enough! If my brother sin again, if my enemy do me another wrong, I will forgive no more"; for beyond our most amazing forgiveness extends the unwearied forgiveness of Christ—the image, the reflexion and the revelation in man of the unconquerable desire to bless and to redeem, which is deepest towards us in the heart of God our Father. Therefore, in this illimitable demand upon us for love, we are greatly blessed. We are placed in the infinite, and kept in the infinite; we are freed from definitions of love, from maxims of forgiveness, from all the foolish casuistry that limits love. In this, at least, we are not to be content with our limitations. There are no limitations. We are challenged by God Himself to share in His infinity; never to endure finality in tenderness, never to imagine the end of love. It is a glorious call, and to answer it brings us into the infinite God Himself. So, as the Apostle Paul exhorts the Ephesians, "walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called, with all

[1] S. H. Palfrey. [2] J. E. Hellier, *Life of David Hill*, 247.

lowliness and meekness, with long-suffering, forbearing one another in love."

Thus will you "fulfil the law of Christ"—that law which has its culminating glory in the atoning death of Calvary; its Divinest symbol in the cross. Then only does the higher life begin with us when we bow ourselves before the majesty of this "supreme offering made by supreme love, because the need of man was great, when we feel the glow of a common life with the lost multitude for whom that offering was made, and behold the history of the world as the history of a great redemption in which we ourselves are fellow-workers in our own place and among our own people."

¶ In the *Pilgrim's Progress*, coming to the Cross is the last incident in the man's salvation. The Cross, which used to be the emblem of slavery, now becomes the means of liberty and lightening. The point to notice here is that *we are saved by what we see*. The sinful man loses his burden upon realizing a fact, and the essence of Christianity is a magnificent realization. Sin had been too much for him, but now God has vanquished it. The joy that follows is inevitable. Bunyan tells us in his *Grace Abounding*, that, when the joy of this release came to him, he could have spoken of it to the very crows that sat upon the ploughed land by the wayside. The power and beauty of the simple sentence which tells of the burden tumbling into the mouth of the sepulchre make that passage one of the religious classics of the world. No commentary is necessary or possible except the memory of that experience in the hearts of those in whose lives it has happened.[1]

[1] John Kelman, *The Road*, i. 71.

# Sowing and Reaping.

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## Sowing and Reaping.

**Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap.—Gal. vi. 7.**

1. It is one of the characteristics of St. Paul that he enforces the commonest duties by the highest motives. When he urges the Corinthians to make a contribution for the poor saints at Jerusalem, he drives home his appeal by these words: "For ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, that ye through his poverty might become rich." When he vindicates himself from the accusation of fanaticism which his enemies had made against him, he says: "Whether we be beside ourselves, it is to God: or whether we be sober, it is for your cause. For the love of Christ constraineth us; because we thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead; and that he died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him which died for them, and rose again." His habit thus was to run up the separate actions of his life to great principles, by which they were dominated, and in accordance with which they were regulated. The poet has reminded us that in the material universe,

> That very law which moulds a tear,
> And bids it trickle from its source,
> That law preserves the earth a sphere,
> And guides the planets in their course.

And much in the same way the Apostle shows that the great fact of our redemption by Jesus Christ should affect the little things of our benevolence and our manner of speech as really as the great things of our life at the crucial and decisive turning points in our history. The background of his life was the cross of Christ, and from that every action, whether to human view important or the reverse, drew its inspiration and acquired its momentum.

Accordingly we are not surprised to find that the words of the text stand in immediate connexion with the command that ministers of the gospel should be liberally supported by those whom they instruct. That is a commonplace duty, but it is lifted by St. Paul into eternal importance, when he links it on, as here, directly and immediately to the doctrine of retribution; for then we are reminded that in the way in which we deal with it we must sow either to the flesh or to the spirit, and reap either corruption or everlasting life.

2. The principle on which this warning rests is stated in terms that give it universal application: *Whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap.* This is in fact the postulate of all moral responsibility. It asserts the continuity of personal existence, the connexion of cause and effect in human character. It makes man the master of his own destiny. It declares that his future depends upon his present choice, and is in truth its evolution and consummation. The twofold lot of "corruption" or "life eternal" is in every case no more, and no less, than the proper harvest of the kind of sowing practised here and now. The use made of our seed-time determines exactly, and with a moral certainty greater even than that which rules in the natural field, what kind of fruitage our immortality will render.

We scatter seeds with careless hand,
And dream we ne'er shall see them more:
But for a thousand years
Their fruit appears
In weeds that mar the land,
Or healthful store.

The deeds we do, the words we say,—
Into still air they seem to fleet,
We count them ever past;
But they shall last,
In the dread judgment they
And we shall meet.[1]

3. While the text is fitted to awaken the careless, we must not forget that it is equally fitted to cheer and encourage the faint-

[1] Keble, *Lyra Innocentium*, 115.

hearted. This, indeed, seems to have been its original purpose. St. Paul was writing to the members of the household of the faith, and was calling them to Christian service. And to encourage these Galatian Christians to labour earnestly, he tells them that their labour cannot be in vain. Their spiritual work is a sowing, and by the eternal law of the universe it must be followed by a reaping. For in the spiritual world, laws are as inevitable and unalterable as in the natural world. Caprice has no more a place in the one than in the other. "Whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap." Just as surely as he who sows to the flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption, so he who sows to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting.

We have thus, first of all, to understand the law of the harvest —"Whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap"; and then we have to receive a warning, which is at the same time a strong encouragement—"Be not deceived; God is not mocked."

## I.

### The Law of the Harvest.

**"Whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap."**

1. Our present life is the seed-time of an eternal harvest. Each recurring year presents a mirror of human existence. The analogy is a commonplace of the world's poetry. The spring is in every land a picture of youth—its morning freshness and innocence, its laughing sunshine, its opening blossoms, its bright and buoyant energy; and, alas, oftentimes its cold winds and nipping frosts and early sudden blight! Summer images a vigorous manhood, with all the powers in action and the pulses of life beating at full swing; when the dreams of youth are worked out in sober, waking earnest; when manly strength is tested and matured under the heat of mid-day toil, and character is disciplined, and success or failure in life's battle must be determined. Then follows mellow autumn, season of shortening days and slackening steps and gathering snows; season too of ripe experience, of chastened thought and feeling, of widened influence and clustering honours. And the story ends in the silence and

winter of the grave! *Ends?* Nay, that is a new beginning! This whole round of earthly vicissitude is but a single spring-time. It is the mere childhood of man's existence, the threshold of the vast house of life.

¶ What men sow, they reap, is not a cheque to be cashed here below, when and how we please, but a word of faith, which cannot be severed from the hope which rests in God, the righteous Judge of heaven and earth. The text points to another, a perfect world; it says: The harvest comes, but whether as a blessing or a curse, for salvation or perdition, that is the great question for us all.[1]

2. The text tells us that all our life long we are employed in sowing the seeds of that harvest which we must eventually reap. Our actions do not expire with their performance, nor our words with their utterance, nor our thoughts with the thinking of them. Each of these is a seed sown, and will bear fruit after its kind. Each of them survives in us, after it seems to be past and gone, and when it is perhaps forgotten, in the impress which it has left upon us, or in the habits and tendencies which it has strengthened and confirmed. It is a matter of experience that every after-period of life is affected more or less by the conduct of every earlier period, manhood by youth, and old age by manhood. "The child is father of the man." Such as we now are, we are as the offspring of the past, the practical result or the living embodiment of the days and years during which we have been occupied—it may be without much thought about it—in acquiring or developing the qualities that now distinguish us. And the like process still continues. We are sowing, from day to day, the seeds of that character which will cleave to us in after life, and which, if the same course of action be adhered to, will follow us beyond the grave, and go with us to the judgment.

¶ We cannot teach art as an abstract skill or power. It is the result of a certain ethical state in the nation and at full period of the national growth that efflorescence of its ethical state will infallibly be produced: be it bad or good, we can no more teach nor shape it than we streak our orchard blossom with strange colours or infuse into its fruit a juice it has not drawn out of the sap. And, farther, such seed of art as we sow, such also must we reap; that which is born of lasciviousness begets lasciviousness.

[1] J. E. B. Mayor.

that which is shed from folly will spring up into folly, and that which is sown of truth bear fruit of truth, according to the ground it is cast on, some thirtyfold, some sixty, some an hundred.[1]

¶ The story of *Adam Bede* is a tragedy arising from the inexorable consequences of human deeds. It will be remembered that it was Charles Bray who first set George Eliot meditating on the law of consequences. Sara Hennell had thought much about it too. She wrote in *Christianity and Infidelity*: "When the law of moral consequences is recognized as fixed and absolute, the hope to escape from it would be as great madness as to resist the law of gravitation." George Eliot's best known expression of this law is in *Romola*: "Our deeds are like our children that are born to us; they live and act apart from our own will. Nay children may be strangled, but deeds never: they have an indestructible life both in and out of our own consciousness." This is the old Buddhist doctrine of Karma. St. Paul had put it still more briefly: "Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap." This law was not fatal to St. Paul, because he believed in regeneration. George Eliot followed Charles Bray. For him, the responsible person was he who, recognizing the inexorable consequences, governed himself accordingly. Nemesis was George Eliot's watchword, but in her handling of this law she approached to the Greek Fate rather than to St. Paul. It is this Fate that makes much of the extraordinary impressiveness of *Adam Bede*. Arthur Donnithorne's sin brought its retribution of terrible suffering not only to himself, but to Hetty, to Adam, to the Poysers. "There's a sort of wrong that can never be made up for," are the words wrung from him after bitter experience.[2]

3. The harvest corresponds in kind to the sowing. Each seed produces its own kind, because God has so ordained. That which we reap from off the fields of nature is always of the same species as that which we have sown. No sane man, even if he should be the most unquestioning believer in the transmutation of species, would expect a crop of valuable grain from an inclosure which he had sown with tares; and every husbandman when he plants his corn does so in the confidence that, according to the uniformity of nature's operations, he will have a harvest of the same. He has no manner of doubt about it. There may be sometimes a question

[1] Ruskin, *Relation of Ethics to Arts*, § 5 (*Works*, xix. 166).
[2] C. Gardner, *The Inner Life of George Eliot*, 117.

in his mind during a long drought as to whether he shall have a larger or smaller crop, possibly even as to whether he shall have a crop at all; but he knows that if he have any crop it will be of the same kind as that which he has planted. On the plane of material nature, then, every one understands, admits and acts upon this principle as an absolute law admitting of no exception —"Whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap."

Our Lord endorses this principle in his Beatitudes. He affirms that the soul's reward matches the soul's effort and expectation. If we hunger and thirst after righteousness, we shall be satisfied with righteousness, and with nothing lower. We reap that which we sow the seed of, and not any other kind of grain. There are some Christians who repine and grow despondent because they do not find themselves reaping a harvest which they have no right to look for. If you hunger and thirst after riches or renown, rather than after righteousness, you may win them on the same terms. If you devote yourself, body and soul, to becoming a successful man rather than a good man, you may probably succeed; only it is not possible to achieve both aims at once.

¶ Whatsoever a man soweth that shall he reap. Mind you, he shall not only see it grow and see it ripen, but he shall *reap*. And *everything* you sow shall grow, and you, and you only, shall most certainly reap. Be sure your sin will find you out. It won't perhaps be found out. But, I say, it will find *you* out. It will grow and grow and eat out your life. It will run you to earth a doomed man. For the end of these things is Death. And you will reap in many directions. You may not know the seed or the ground you sow, but *sow* and you will *reap*. Men know thistles from oats. You sow and sow, and then you hope God will forgive and your page be clean. I answer you, Nay. Sow thistles, and thistles will come up. Sow oats, and thistles will not come up, oats will come up. "Sow thistles," you say, "and then sow good oats, and thus clear the thistles." No, the harvest will be thistles and oats.[1]

¶ One story connected with this time Mr. Erskine used to tell. It was of the Rev. William Dow, a good man, who was minister of a parish in the south of Scotland, but who for siding with the views of Mr. Campbell of Row was called to stand his trial before the General Assembly. On the Sunday immediately before he went to Edinburgh for his trial, being quite sure what fate awaited

[1] *The Life of Henry Drummond*, 477.

him, he thus addressed his country congregation:—"You all know that to-morrow I leave this to go to Edinburgh, and to stand my trial before the General Assembly. And the result I know will be that I shall be turned out of my parish, and that this is the last time I shall address you as your minister. This you all know. But there is one thing about myself which you do not know, but which I will tell you. When I first came here to be your minister I found difficulty in obtaining a house in the parish to live in. There was but one house in the parish I could have that was suitable, and that belonged to a poor widow. I went and offered a higher rent for her house than she paid. She was dispossessed, and I got the house. I put that poor woman out of her house then, and I hold it to be a righteous thing in God to put me out of my parish now."[1]

There are loyal hearts, there are spirits brave,
  There are souls that are pure and true;
Then give to the world the best you have,
  And the best shall come back to you.

Give love, and love to your heart will flow,
  A strength in your utmost need;
Have faith, and a score of hearts will show
  Their faith in your word and deed.

For life is the mirror of king and slave,
  'Tis just what you are and do;
Then give to the world the best you have,
  And the best will come back to you.[2]

4. The harvest is always an increase of the sowing. The crop is a multiplication of the seed. From the seed of the flesh the ripened result is corruption, which is flesh in its most revolting state. From the seed of the Spirit the full ear is life everlasting, which is eternal holiness with its concomitant of endless happiness. We plant a single grain, we pluck a full ear; we sow in handfuls, we reap in bosomfuls; we scatter bushels, but we gather in rich granary stores. The remorse of earth is but the germ of the despair of hell. The holiness of the present is only the bud from which will blossom that vision of God which is the full-flowered beatitude of heaven.

[1] Principal Shairp, in *Letters of Thomas Erskine*, ii. 362.
[2] Madeline S. Bridges.

This stern law of reaping as we sow has a gracious and gospel aspect in respect to the abundance of the harvest, whether natural or spiritual. Our Lord insists especially upon this. He says that the seed which fell upon good ground bore fruit, "some an hundredfold, some sixtyfold, some thirtyfold." May we not suppose that He had been counting the grains in a wheat ear, and saw in this the beneficence of the law of growth, and a prophecy of nature as to the growth of His Kingdom? This natural multiplication goes far beyond what we should have expected. It is increase after the Divine measure, rather than the human. Our Lord sees another example of this in the mustard plant, which grows from one of the tiniest of seeds, but within the year mounts up into quite a branchy bush, the biggest of the garden herbs of Palestine, and affords rest and shelter for the birds.

This teaching is confirmed by our experience of life. We are all tempted to despise the small crosses, the small openings for kindness and self-sacrifice the day brings us, and the petty duties and burdens which fill up our humdrum existence. When we meet these faithfully and nobly, we have our reward on a grander scale than we could have expected. Burdens grow to wings, crosses to crowns, faithful endurance to triumph; and from each discharge of duty we acquire the power to meet the next with efficiency. "We see dimly in the present what is small and what is great," as Lowell says. We are blinded by the illusions of life, and take the great for the small, because it is not the big. Our small victories in the face of temptation are won over obstacles and spiritual enemies of the highest rank, and are won to the shaping of our characters, the strengthening of our wills, the purification of our vision, the increase of our faith and joy. Professor William James suggests that to do each day of life some one thing which we know we ought to do, but which we do not want to do, would have the result of making us wiser and braver men, and more fit for great things if these fell to our share.

Hast thou, dear brother, toiled through many years
And seen no fruits, though thou hast freely sown
Thy life in labour and with watchful tears
Watered the soil yet none the richer grown?

Remember that the reaping is God's own,
And He can gather even of doubts and fears;
We only plough and plant our little field—
He is our harvest, and His Love the yield.

Be sure no kindly word or work may fail
To leave a blessing, if we know it not
And our poor efforts often err and ail,
While nothing that we do is without spot;
Christ stands Yoke-fellow, in the lowliest lot;
He is the light, and prayers at last prevail;
And, should thy service seem a wasted part,
It still shall blossom in some happier heart.

Not ours to finish tasks or seek the sight
Of precious increase and the praise of man,
But just to scatter seed in nature's night
And leave with God the issue of His plan;
He will complete what He in Grace began,
And order even thine errors all aright.
Thou wert well paid, whatever clouds do come,
If thou hast helped one wandering sinner Home.[1]

## II.

### The Folly of Self-Deception.

**"Be not deceived; God is not mocked."**

The word for "mocked" implies the most unseemly and insulting gesture. When is God thus mocked? God is mocked when we pretend to be His, while we cut our being in two and give the better half to Satan; when we draw nigh unto Him with our lips while our hearts are far from Him; when we say, "I go, sir," and go not; when we try to combine the vile pleasure of sin with the perfect allegiance which God requires; when we say "Lord, Lord," and do evil continually.

1. The danger of deception is very real. For one thing the interval between the sowing and the reaping is much longer than in the natural world, and the connexion between them is not

[1] F. W. Orde Warde.

clearly seen. Think of a child that has been foolishly brought up. No effort is made to train its will to obedience, to instil into its mind a reverence for God, and a love for the high things of the soul. There is a certain pleasure in giving the little one its own way. Thus the evil seeds have been sown. The child becomes a man. Years lie between the sowing and the reaping. Only then may it be that the harvest of pain and shame comes home which brings the grey head with sorrow to the grave. The interval is so long that the connexion between the sorrow and the foolish training is not recognized, and parents wonder why their children are so stubborn, self-willed, and ungrateful. They do not see that they are the victims of their own folly. Twenty years ago they sowed the seeds of which they now reap the bitter harvest. They have deceived themselves, but God is not mocked.

¶ Napoleon had the faculty, when he chose, of creating a fool's paradise for himself. In the Russian campaign he had, for example, ordered his marshals to operate with armies which had ceased to exist. When they remonstrated he simply replied, "Why rob me of my calm?" When the Allies invaded France he professed to rely greatly on the army of Marshal Macdonald. "Would you like," said the Marshal to Beugnot, "to review my army? It will not take you long. It consists of myself and my chief of the staff. Our supplies are four straw chairs and a plank table." Again, during the campaign of 1814 the Emperor was detailing his plans to Marmont. Marmont was to do this and that with his corps of ten thousand men. At each repetition of this figure Marmont interrupted to say that he had only three. Yet Napoleon persisted to the end: "Marmont with his ten thousand men." But the strangest instance of this is detailed by Meneval, who tells us that when the Emperor added up numbers of his soldiers he always added them up wrong, and always swelled the total. So at St. Helena he really, we think, brought himself to believe that he would be released when Lord Holland became Prime Minister, or when Princess Charlotte ascended the throne.[1]

2. Long before we gather into our arms the final harvest, we are receiving according to what we have done, whether it be good or evil. In the end we shall still be as we have been, only in more perfect measure. "He that is unjust, let him be unjust still; and he which is filthy, let him be filthy still: and he that is

[1] Lord Rosebery, *Napoleon: The Last Phase*, 113.

righteous, let him be righteous still: and he that is holy, let him be holy still." Let us not imagine that the principles of moral order will be different in the end from what they were at the beginning—God is always judging us as He will judge us at the last. The end is not yet. The harvest still tarries. The corn-stalk is not matured, nor the full grain shown in the ear. But we are making our future every hour, and with many of us the crop is fast ripening into the eternal day.

Every evil thought or deed has sentence against it speedily executed in the character. One cannot do a mean thing or think a base thought without becoming like the thing he thinks or does The worm takes on the colour of the leaf upon which it feeds. Every vile thought leaves its trail of slime behind, leaves the mind filthier for even its momentary presence. Every bad act of a man's life makes it easier for him evermore to do the bad. A miser not only scrapes his fingers to the bone in raking together his money, he hardens his heart to the core. "What is put into the strong box," it is truly said, "is taken out of the man." He who cheats, is cheating himself worse than all others. The thief steals from himself; the liar turns himself into a living lie; the profligate is his own victim. The man who attempts to injure his neighbour, only succeeds in injuring himself. The wrong that he does his own soul is ten times more severe and lasting than any evil he can inflict on others. "No man," says Burke, "ever had a point of pride that was not injurious to him"; and St. Bernard wrote: "Nothing can work me damage except myself; the harm that I sustain I carry about with me, and never am a real sufferer but by my own fault."

¶ In this God's-world, with its wild-whirling eddies, and mad foam-oceans, where men and nations perish as if without law, and judgment for an unjustly thing is sternly delayed, dost thou think that there is therefore no justice? It is what the fool hath said in his heart. It is what the wise, in all times, were wise because they denied, and knew forever not to be. I tell thee again, there is nothing else but justice. One strong thing I find here below: the just thing, the true thing. For it is the right and noble alone that will have victory in this struggle; the rest is wholly an obstruction, a postponement and fearful imperilment of the victory. Towards an eternal centre of right and nobleness, and of that only, is all this confusion tending. We already know

whither it is all tending; what will have victory, what will have none![1]

¶ Before commencing his campaign, he called on two ancient intimates, Lord Heddon and his distant cousin Darley Absworthy, both Members of Parliament, useful men, though gouty, who had sown in their time a fine crop of wild oats, and advocated the advantage of doing so seeing that they did not fancy themselves the worse for it. He found one with an imbecile son, and the other with consumptive daughters. "So much," he wrote in his Notebook, "for the Wild Oats theory!"[2]

3. The text has been commonly interpreted as solely a warning to the profligate. Yet the context shows that the words were intended rather as a solemn encouragement to the faithful. The Apostle is writing not to terrify evildoers, but to cheer those good men who else might grow weary of sowing the good seed. And he invokes this profound and awful truth as an exceeding great and precious promise for all the dejected and disconsolate people of God. Christians in some respects are peculiarly apt to be deceived. The illusions of life can dazzle and perplex the wisest children of this world. But those who strive to walk by faith are doubly vexed by the falsehood of appearances. From the nature of the case, their goal and their recompense must lie out of sight. The fair fruit of their labour hardly ripens in our earthly climate, and even the bravest workers will faint and grow weary because after long husbandry they can discern hardly a trace of the blade and the ear.

"Be not deceived; God is not mocked." We may lose heart and hope, but His will never wavers. We seem vanquished, but His dominion ruleth over all. Though we be faithless He abideth faithful; He cannot deny Himself. Whoever else is cheated and betrayed, there is no such thing as failure in the counsels of God. Our schemes and our works miscarry, but "the fabric of God's holy Kingdom is slowly rising, while He patiently, but certainly, fulfils His purposes." The universe shall not disappoint its Creator and Redeemer at last.

¶ While Zinzendorf was still a lad at school, he united his companions in a guild, which he called "The Order of the Grain

[1] Carlyle, *Past and Present*, bk. i. ch. ii.
[2] George Meredith, *The Ordeal of Richard Feverel*.

of Mustard Seed," and of which the badge was a ring with this motto, "No man liveth unto himself." It was very little of course that these boys could do to help others. But they planted a seed, and the seedling grew into the great Moravian Missionary Brotherhood, with branches extending throughout the world. And so with all other great efforts. They must have a beginning; they must have a seed. And if only the seed is there, sown in good ground, it will, like the seed of our Lord's parable, bring forth fruit, some an hundredfold, some sixtyfold, some thirtyfold, for our reaping in the after-days.[1]

What matter if I stand alone?
I wait with joy the coming years;
My heart shall reap where it has sown,
And garner up its fruit of tears.

The waters know their own, and draw
The brook that springs in yonder height,
So flows the good with equal law
Unto the soul of pure delight.

The stars come nightly to the sky:
The tidal wave unto the sea;
Nor time, nor space, nor deep, nor high,
Can keep my own away from me.[2]

[1] G. Milligan, *Lamps and Pitchers*, 151. [2] John Burroughs.

# Weariness in Well-Doing.

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## Weariness in Well-Doing.

**And let us not be weary in well-doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not.—Gal. vi. 9.**

1. St. Paul had been amongst these Galatians. He had planted the gospel amongst them, and formed their churches, and knew how zealous they were at the outset for the glory of Christ; and so beloved was he amongst them that if necessary they would have taken out their very eyes for him; but he had heard that a change had come over them. He had to say to them: "Ye did run well; who did hinder you that ye should not obey the truth?" He knew there were many who had begun to grow weary, and that there was a possibility of many more growing weary and fainting, and consequently the cause of Christ beginning to decline; therefore he wrote them this Epistle, and in these closing verses, in this pathetic and impressive way, said: "Let us not be weary in well-doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not." With that perfect courtesy of which the Apostle was such an example, he identifies himself with the people to whom he is writing. He supposes for the moment that he might be inclined to the very same failing, which he perceived in them. He is identifying himself with them as subject to the same passions and feelings, so he does not say, "Do not ye be weary in well-doing," but he says, "Let us not be weary in well-doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not."

2. Let us grasp what the Apostle really does say. This is the same St. Paul who includes in the catalogue of his own trials "in weariness and painfulness and watchings." There is physical fatigue, and mental fatigue, and spiritual fatigue. Your ardent, eager worker is not denied his hours of depression when he is a tired man. More precious to Him who sees in secret, perhaps, are some tears of disappointment than the equanimity of him

whose high hopes have never been disappointed because he never had any high hopes to disappoint. Did not Christ Jesus know weariness of body and heaviness of soul? No Christian is exempt from these feelings but he to whom the thought of the Kingdom is a pleasant, pious speculation, and never a sacred burden on the heart; to whom the prayer for it is never an agony, and the care for it never a cross. St. Paul knew all this and more; for he knew the inward discouragements also. He knew the deception and instability of his own heart. He knew the tempting voices of ease and pleasure, the luxuries of the intellectual life, and the indolence with which the flesh is so curiously sympathetic. And to be up and at it, day in and day out, unrecognized and unrewarded, nobody apparently wanting you or your help or your message, or caring much whether you come or go, labour of body and agony of soul expended seemingly to so little purpose—he knew all this, and, knowing it, stood and cried, "In doing beautiful things be not guilty of the crowning baseness of cowardice, tiring, fainting, deserting the divinest life, hope and service—the one thing worth doing, the one life worth living. Do not play the coward, in baseness of heart abandoning the doing of good and beautiful deeds." This is St. Paul's adjuration to the Christian Church.

¶ I wish it were possible by any conceivable turn of the English phraseology to give the exact force of this epigrammatic saying, "Let us not be weary in well-doing." I can, perhaps, partially explain it by saying that a frequent antithesis in Greek is between καλὸς and κακὸς, what is good and what is bad, or, more strictly, what is beautiful and what is base. These two words are used antithetically in this epigram. "In doing beautiful things let us not be base," would be, of course, a very weak equivalent, though it would preserve some of the literal form of the saying. But this word "to be base" is the technical word for to turn coward, to lose heart, and so to tire at some hilly or difficult ground because of a weakness and infirmity of heart. In doing the beautiful in life let us not turn coward, let us not lose heart. That is the true meaning, although, as you will infer, little or nothing of the striking epigrammatic form is preserved. This word "to be base" or "to turn coward" is a tribute to the belief that the crowning typical baseness is cowardice, the flagging, fainting, tiring of the soul. I quarrel altogether with the translation "to be weary." To be weary in our well-doing is a luxury denied to

nobody. The baseness is in the cowardice, it is in the losing heart. It is in the wearying of it, if you like, although I cannot altogether assent even to that translation, for I have known men and women a little weary of it all—the strain and the struggle and the disappointment of "doing good"—who, nevertheless, are quite untainted by the baseness of cowardice, who have never lost hope or heart, who are still prepared under dark skies to plod and plod with a quiet, unfaltering resolution that unsuccess cannot discourage, until their long day's work is done, and the welcome signal comes for home and sleep.[1]

¶ No one should think that sensitiveness to fear debars him from the grace and helpfulness of courage, or that a sanguine readiness to take things easily is any safeguard against cowardice. For this δειλία, or cowardice, like faith, its great antagonist, is not ultimately evinced in feeling one way or another, but in action. It is evinced whenever a man declines a task which he believes, or even suspects uncomfortably, that he was meant to face; whenever he looks along the way of faith, and thinks it will ask much of him, and takes the way of comfort and security—the way where he can be sure of continuous company and indisputable common sense. It may appear either in action or in refusing to act, according as the demand of faith is for patient waiting or for prompt advance; but the central wrong of it is the withholding of the service, the self-sacrifice, a man was born and bred and trained to render; it is the sin of "the children of Ephraim," who, "being armed and carrying bows, turned back in the day of battle." We can see sometimes in history or in fiction how a man seems prepared for and led up to the great opportunity of his life; something is asked of him, some effort, some renunciation, some endurance, which is not asked of others. He may say that if he refuses he is not making his own life easier than the lives of thousands round him seem quite naturally and undisturbedly to be; but he sinks thenceforward far below them if he does refuse.[2]

> It was not in the open fight
> We threw away the sword,
> But in the lonely watching
> In the darkness by the ford.
> The waters lapped, the night-wind blew,
> Full armed the Fear was born and grew,
> And we were flying ere we knew
> From panic in the night.[3]

[1] C. S. Horne, *The Rock of Ages*, 77.
[2] Francis Paget, *Studies in the Christian Character*.
[3] Rudyard Kipling, *Plain Tales from the Hills*, 232.

## I.

### A Caution.

**"Let us not be weary in well-doing."**

1. We understand by weariness in well-doing weariness under all those duties and claims and responsibilities which a religious (in our case, a Christian) life lays upon us. To the Christian, life brings one long demand—upon his substance, or his time, or his patience, or his love, or his faith. He recognizes this demand in his home, in his church, in his fellow-creatures, not to speak of the peremptory demands which his own soul makes upon him.

It stares at us out of history and experience as one of life's greater ironies that warnings against intermittent work, faint-hearted work, have to be uttered principally against the highest form of work done from the purest and least selfish of motives. You might reasonably think that the lower drudgery would be the first to pall, the drudgery that is merely selfish in its scheme and scope. You might say, Let light and air, space and beauty, into your manner of life, and it is good-bye to all apathy and listlessness. But worldliness is everlastingly shaming us. Is there any labour so assiduous, any toil so unintermittent, as that which is inspired by the very meanest and earthliest of motives, dross of self-interest unmixed with any higher metal of beneficence and disinterested desire? It seems as if life's common prose were a subject of more commanding and abiding interest than life's loftiest poetry. It seems that, if you narrow a man's outlook to four walls, you will get more out of him of constant, unbroken work than if you give him the full horizon and the unlimited firmament and the sunlight and beauty of the world. The world being what it is, it is harder to live above it than to live down at its level. Sporadic goodness is common enough; men rather like than otherwise to find some relief or recreation in an act of benevolence. But it is like going to the sea-side, or having a day in the country. It is an occasional luxury, the too frequent repetition of which would destroy its charm. To make this higher service a life instead of an experiment, normal and natural instead of accidental and occasional—this was the purpose and mission of Jesus.

¶ Some one has compared our undertakings and purposes to that great image which Nebuchadnezzar saw in his dream. The head was of fine gold—so are the beginnings of most men's plans. Nothing is too costly, no labour too great. The breast and the arms are of silver. Interest begins to slacken; their views of possible success are modified; they have less exalted notions of what they are going to do. Lower still the silver has become brass—bright as the golden head, but not real, not genuine. They go on with the work, and it looks the same, but it is brass, not gold. The feet are part iron and part clay. Dreary ending to a work so nobly begun—what a picture of imperfection, a gradual deterioration, gold first, clay last! Such is the spiritual life of many who did run well. Such is the well-doing of many who started with high purposes to work for God. And now their life is jaded, cold, half-hearted. "Weary in well-doing" sums up their interior as well as their exterior life.[1]

(1) A religious man feels that he is where he is, and he is what he is, not for his own sake so much as for the sake of others. He is here to help and bless the world. The great discovery of Christianity was this, that human life might be made better, sweeter, more wholesome; in the words of Scripture, that the world might be saved. And as Christians we should rejoice in the besetting duties of life, in its unremitting calls and claims upon us. Not to rejoice in this life of ours is to be weary. We are weary when we feel our duties to be dry; when we feel the claims of Christian love and brotherhood troublesome and against the grain. We are weary when we are indolent at the summons of faith or hope or love. We are weary in those hours when we do not like to think how much sorrow and how much need there is in the world and round about us, and that we might do something to reduce the bulk of human misery.

¶ In weariness we seek to reduce our exertions to the lowest possible point. Weary men soon find out how little they may do, the least they may do. Retrenching our liberalities, we are feeling charity irksome; resigning one office after another with ingenious pleas, we are becoming weary in service. Ever striving to bring our Christian life down to the lowest standard is proof positive of decaying conviction and enthusiasm. The whole-hearted man asks, "How much can I be, give, do?" The weary man asks, "How little?" In weariness men magnify trifles. Dr. Living-

[1] A. L. Moore, *From Advent to Advent*, 95.

stone tells that the Africans are sometimes afflicted by a singular disorder which causes them in passing over a straw to lift up their feet as if they were passing over the trunk of a tree. Weariness is a similar malady; it makes great efforts to overcome trifling and imaginary obstructions. The grasshopper is a burden. Weariness is seriously offended by the veriest trifles, by a word, or a look, or by the lack of a word or look which really means nothing.[1]

¶ What does The Slough of Despond mean in the allegory? Christian himself answers, tracing his misadventure to fear. It is the despondency of reaction which, if it become permanent, may deepen into religious monomania. It is to some extent physical, the result of overstrained nerves, so that "the change of weather" mentioned may be taken quite literally. A clear air and a sunny day are great aids to faith, and there are many, like Robertson of Brighton, whose fight with depression is brought on by rainy seasons. Thus it is not only sharp conviction of sin that we have here, but a state of hopelessness and weariness of spirit whose causes are very composite. All the evil side of life flows into it. Every sinful memory and unbelieving thought increases it. Bunyan's reticence adds to his power here as elsewhere, for by not defining it more particularly he leaves each reader with a general symbol which he can fill in with the details of his own experience. Dr. Whyte reminds us that Christians are partly responsible for this slough. The Christian life is sometimes described in such a way as to make one think that there is no use trying; and there are many, like Widow Pascoe in *Dan'l Quorm*, who express a melancholy resignation in such phrases as "trusting Him where they cannot trace Him." These are the chronic folk of the slough, who dwell so near its banks as to be spiritually bronchitic with its exhalations. This is bad enough; but when despondency comes to be regarded as a virtue, and happy faith in God as presumption, then the slough has become a place of sin as well as of misery. Humility, doubtless, is derived from *humus*; but as the quality of a living soul it must mean *on* the ground, not *in* it. Nor does it mean grovelling either, but standing on the ground. The voice Ezekiel heard still calls to all men, "Son of man, stand upon thy feet."[2]

(2) Over and above those demands for our love and sympathy which our religion makes, there is the fundamental requirement of God that we ourselves be pure and holy in our own inward

[1] W. L. Watkinson, *Studies in Christian Character*, i. 75
[2] John Kelman, *The Road*, i. 20.

parts. That is another region in which weariness always threatens us. We may know what it is to be impatient of the regular duties of the religious life—to feel public worship an interference with our natural indolence, and so to think less of public worship, and to imagine some other way of spending the Sabbath would be better, because we would like some other way—as if we had not to suspect our likes rather than be guided by them. Then, to speak of more intimate things, we may know what it is to hurry through our prayers, feeling a certain irksomeness in what—if we were as we should be—is "the great love the Father hath bestowed upon us" to call Him Father, and to speak to Him as children. We may know what it is to put off the facing of private moral questions; we may know what it is to resent the perpetual demand for goodness, for seriousness, for self-examination, for religion, for restraint and abstinence and prayer.

¶ At the Interpreter's House, the fourth scene is the fire at the wall. Here life is seen in a new aspect, chosen in order to bring out the spiritual forces of good and evil which are at work upon it. The scientific definition of life as the "sum total of the functions which resist death" is strikingly applicable here. This view, which Professor Henry Drummond expounds so eloquently in his *Natural Law in the Spiritual World*, is exactly that of Bunyan's figure. Life is a wasting thing, a waning lamp, a dying fire. And just as, in the natural world, there are many diseases and accidents which threaten to hasten the decay and violently end the resistance to it, so there are in the spiritual world agencies such as temptation, discouragement, and many others, which tend to extinguish the inner fire. These are all summed up in the figure of Satan casting water upon the flames. Yet the wonderful fact is that the flame is not extinguished. There are lives known to us all which seem to have everything against their spiritual victory—heredity, disposition, circumstances, companions—yet in spite of fate their flame burns on. The secret is that Christ is at the back of the wall, and there is no proof so wonderful as this of the reality of Jesus Christ as an agent in human life. Besides the two main agents there are plenty of human ones at work for both these ends. Some people are for ever throwing cold water upon the fires of the soul, devil's firemen, whose trade seems to be that of discouraging. Others, and these are the blessed ones of the world, pour in upon the flagging spirit the oil of good cheer and hope.[1]

[1] John Kelman, *The Road*, i. 61.

2. Why are we weary? There are many temptations to weariness. Let us touch upon a few of the most frequently encountered.

(1) Some of the hindrances arise from within, and are connected with the state of our own hearts. Although it should be our earnest desire and prayer that the God of peace may "sanctify us wholly," and that our whole spirit, and soul, and body, may be thoroughly and harmoniously consecrated to the service of Christ, yet every believer knows, to his loss and to his lamentation, that he is sanctified "but in part"; that there is a law in his members warring against the law of his mind; that the flesh lusteth against the spirit, and the spirit against the flesh, and that these are contrary the one to the other. Instead, therefore, of making any steady progress in the way of well-doing, he finds himself drawn as it were in different directions; swayed hither and thither by the conflict of opposing principles which is going on within him. He is like a kingdom divided against itself, and sometimes feels as if he had two distinct and discordant natures struggling in his bosom. It is true that—

> Evil into the mind of god or man
> May come and go, so unapproved, and leave
> No spot or blame behind.

But even where no "spot" is left, its confusing influence is felt; and hence his inward experience is often but a chaos of antagonistic purposes and conflicting inclinations. There is generally such a wide difference between his aims and his actings that he always finds reason to be dissatisfied with himself. The good that he would, he does not; the evil he would not, that he does. And of this he is always sure, that when he would do good, evil is present with him, hindering his higher resolutions, and hanging to the skirts of all his better designs, until he is often constrained to cry out, with the Apostle, "Oh wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from this body of death?" Sometimes the spirit is willing but the flesh is weak; at other times the spirit is weak while the flesh is strong; and between the various impediments arising from these sources, the believer's progress is so grievously interrupted, that he is, at certain seasons, apt to sink into a state of utter discouragement.

I would have gone; God bade me stay:
I would have worked; God bade me rest.
He broke my will from day to day,
He read my yearnings unexpressed
And said them nay.

Now I would stay; God bids me go:
Now I would rest; God bids me work,
He breaks my heart tossed to and fro,
My soul is wrung with doubts that lurk
And vex it so.

I go, Lord, where Thou sendest me;
Day after day I plod and moil:
But, Christ my God, when will it be
That I may let alone my toil
And rest with Thee?[1]

(2) When a man grows "weary in well-doing," it may be the effect of a false modesty. As he thinks of how very much misery, sin, want there is in the world, he may say, "After all, how little I can do. What is my little when compared with the infinite need of the world?" And so, from a genuine feeling of how much there is to be done in the world for Christ, we may actually let ourselves off with doing nothing. Yet surely one great principle of our religion is just this—to believe in the infinite power for good, in the infinite future of the Christlike behaviour of every one. And in any case, we have only our duties. We only know what Christ asks of us: it is not for us to know what will become of our deed, or how Christ will arrange for what we cannot overtake. We know the parable of the leaven in the meal. We know that the few loaves which Christ blessed and broke fed five thousand, besides women and children.

¶ Two men met upon a steamer during a Scotch excursion and they talked with interest of many things, among others of Sunday schools. "To tell the truth," said one, "I am not very enthusiastic about that kind of work. I was a teacher for many years, and after all I seem to have done no good." "Well, I *do* believe in Sunday school work," said the other. "As a lad I received life-long influences for good in my old class at school;" and he named the school with which he had once been connected.

[1] Christina G. Rossetti, *Christ Our All in All* (*Poetical Works*, 242).

"Were you there," cried the other; "that was where I taught. Were you there in my time? My name is——" "And I was your scholar. I remember you now." The younger man gave his name, and memories succeeded each other concerning that old school unforgotten by both. There, side by side, stood the teacher, who believed he had done nothing, and the man he had influenced for life.[1]

¶ In the early morning, when the dew was bright on the grass, a child passed along the highway, and sang as he went. It was spring, and the ferns were unfolding their green fronds, and the hepatica showed purple under her green fur. The child looked about him with his eager happy eyes, rejoicing in all he saw, and answering the birds' songs with notes as gay as their own. Now and then he dropped a seed here and there, for he had a handful of them; sometimes he threw one to the birds; again he dropped one for the squirrels; and still again he would toss one into the air for very play, for that was what he loved best. Now it chanced that he passed by a spot where the earth lay bare, with no tree or plant to cover its brown breast. "Oh!" said the child, "poor place, will nothing grow in you? here is a seed for you, and now I will plant it properly." So he planted the seed properly, and smoothed the earth over it, and went his way singing, and looking at the white clouds in the sky and at the green things unfolding around him. It was a long, long journey the child had to go. Many perils beset his path, many toils he had to overpass, many wounds and bruises he received on the way. When he returned, one would hardly have known, to look at him, that he was still a child. The day had been cruelly hot, and still the afternoon sun beat fiercely down on the white road. His clothes were torn and dusty; he toiled on, and sighed as he went, longing for some spot of shade where he might sit down to rest. Presently he saw in the distance a waving of green, and a cool shadow stretching across the white glowing road; and he drew near and it was a tree young and vigorous spreading its arms abroad, mantled in green leaves that whispered and rustled. Thankfully the child threw himself down in the pleasant shade, and rested from his weary journey, and as he rested he raised his eyes to the green whispering curtain above him and blessed the hand that planted the tree. The little green leaves nodded and rustled and whispered to one another: "Yes! yes! it is himself he is blessing. But he does not know, and that is the best of all!"[2]

[1] *Expository Times*, i. 12.

[2] Mrs. Laura Richards, *The Silver Crown*.

(3) In the very attempt at doing good we come across so much evil of which we had never dreamt. Evil is one thing looked at from a distance; it is quite another when we get into close proximity with it. The angel of light is anything but an angel when we come face to face with him. Novitiates in Christian service come to their work with bright dreams, grand expectations, only to find that life is a series of disillusionments. Fighting evil plays sad havoc with our cheap optimism, delivers us from our flippancy, convinces us that our rose-water schemes are utterly impracticable, and that our work is no mere child's play.

¶ Suppose we are of those who have made the great choice, have been converted, as some would say. Well, thank God, we have made a good beginning; but is the conflict won? Wait for the end. You have met the enemy, and by the grace of God you have beaten him. Henceforward your life on earth will be a series of conflicts, unless you grow weary and faint. Persevere, and you will know why the life of Christ's followers is called a struggle or a race. You will begin to understand why the most experienced veterans are most cautious and circumspect; you will begin to know that you may not despise any help that God has given you. All the exultation and satisfaction which you felt at your first victory will have gone—given way to the silent earnestness of him whose every muscle is strained in his efforts to win the victory.[1]

(4) The ingratitude of those we strive to help is a common cause of weariness. Ingratitude is as common as it is detestable. Almost all nations have voiced their sense of the sin of ingratitude in striking proverbs. "Eat the present, and break the dish," says the Arabic proverb. The Spanish says, "Bring up a raven, and it will peck out your eyes." "Put a snake in your bosom, and when it is warm it will sting you," says the English proverb. The world is ungrateful. It lives on God's bounty, and yet refuses to own His power or to accept His love. "Where are the nine?" asked Christ; and there is a tone of indescribable sadness in His question. We have all felt the deadening influence of ingratitude. Our warm sympathy has flowed out in words and deeds of helpfulness, and that sympathy has been so chilled by the ingratitude and unworthiness of those we helped that it has

[1] Aubrey L. Moore.

flowed back to paralyse our hearts. But we must do good from higher motives than to secure the gratitude of those benefited. We must do it for its own sake and for Christ's sake. He laid down His life for us when we were unthankful. Thank God, there are some who are grateful. We have seen the tear of gratitude tremble in the eye, and when it was wiped away we have seen the light of hope sparkle there. A word of kindness has banished from some weary heart and sorrowful home weeks of sadness, and has opened a future of hopefulness. Do not become morose. Do not say that gratitude is a forgotten virtue. A cynic is almost as bad as an ingrate. Indeed, cynicism and ingratitude are kin to each other. In many cases your words and deeds of well-doing are bearing precious fruit in the changed homes and the redeemed lives of men, women, and children, who shall rise up to call you blessed.

¶ Gratitude, however, is sometimes felt and expressed, as the following incident illustrates. "When I first learnt to know her she had a little cottage on a high road, the great Bath road of many tramps. It had been the lodge of an abandoned manor house, and was, of course, close to the gateway. There she tamed her tramp men, and made them friends. Every man who came had a table and chair under shelter; the plainest, simplest food; materials for mending his clothes, tea or cocoa to drink, her smile, her wonderful eyes upon his, her open heart and word. Never a thing was stolen from her doors, her wide windows; never a penny did she give; but many a man begged leave to chop wood for her, to dig in her garden—some little thing to show what she had done for him."[1]

(5) Another temptation to weariness arises from the apparent want of success attending our labours. It is but natural that we should look for some results from our efforts and, within certain limits, this feeling is not only natural, but lawful and right. We should be apt to sink altogether if we had reason to believe that we were labouring in vain, and spending our strength for naught; and hence it very seldom happens that the Lord leaves His servants without some tokens of success. But still there are times when these tokens are so poor and scanty that we are ready to say with the disciples, "We have toiled all the night, and have taken nothing." But we should never forget that the

[1] W. S. Palmer, in *Michael Fairless: Her Life and Writings*, 5.

Word of the Lord will not return unto Him void—that it shall accomplish the thing which He pleaseth, and prosper in the end whereto He sends it. And what is true of the preaching of the Word, is true of every other way in which we seek to promote our Master's work. If we are guided by His counsel and actuated by His Spirit, we cannot fail to be successful, whether we see it or not. No good word is ever wasted, no good deed is ever lost.

¶ Publicans and sinners, when we read about them in the New Testament, are poetical; but publicans and sinners, when we meet them in the present century, are very prosaic people, there is nothing poetical about them at all; and we get tired of trying to do anything for them. We start out in life with an impression that everybody wants to be better, that the ignorant want to learn, that the vicious people want to be virtuous, that the idle people want to work. But we do not undertake to do good work on that notion more than a week before we find that we are mistaken. The tramp comes to us, and is very sure that he wants work; give him some work, and he has not worked twenty-four hours when he wants some other job. The drinking man we get hold of, and we are sure that he wants to reform, and he is sure that he wants to reform. We get him up out of the gutter, and in a week we go out, and he is down in the gutter again, and we say, "It's no use; it is too hard work."[1]

¶ In the church at Somerville, New Jersey, where I was afterwards pastor, John Vredenburgh preached for a great many years. He felt that his ministry was a failure, and others felt so, although he was a faithful minister preaching the gospel all the time. He died, and died amid some discouragements, and went home to God; for no one ever doubted that John Vredenburgh was a good Christian minister. A little while after his death there came a great awakening in Somerville, and one Sabbath two hundred souls stood up at the Christian altar espousing the cause of Christ, among them my own father and mother. And what was peculiar in regard to nearly all of those two hundred souls was that they dated their religious impressions from the ministry of John Vredenburgh.[2]

¶ Some years ago an orphan obtained a humble position in a bank through the kindness of a friend. His friend said to him: "All I will ask of you is that you should be the first to come and the last to go, and that you should never refuse extra

[1] Lyman Abbott. [2] *The Autobiography of T. De Witt Talmage*, 17.

work." The lad went on faithfully, but for years no one seemed to observe him. He had the work, but not the thanks. Then a day came when he was promoted, and he is climbing the ladder now. He had faith to believe and to go on, and the harvest came. Many give over, and all their lives are a disappointment.[1]

3. Now, lastly, what is the cure for weariness?

(1) To prevent this evil there must be increased consecration. We must renew our engagement to be the Lord's. The weariness of religious exercises can be removed only by waiting upon Him who will renew our strength. The loss of personal interest in spiritual things can be restored only by communion with Him in whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. The hyacinth will flourish for a while in a vase of water, but if it is to perpetuate itself, to bring forth fruit and seed, it must be restored to its native soil. And so your Christian life, left to itself, without any of its usual elements of growth, may for a time seem to put forth beautiful blossoms under the impetus it has received; but in order to grow vigorously and bring forth the peaceable fruits of righteousness, it must be planted anew in the soil of faith and love in Christ Jesus from which it sprang.

There is a way by which most of us may get back our eagerness for God's service, and get it back immediately. It is by remembering our sins or some particular wrong-doing, from the guilt of which we trust to God to hold us pardoned. No other method so suddenly makes a man—a man who has had some such history — real, and brings him to his knees with a full heart. "My sin is ever before me"—weariness passes immediately at that thought. For the proof one has that God has really forgiven him his sins and has accepted him, is that he himself is now serving God, that he has now given himself to God. And if for a moment he discovers himself reluctant and disobedient towards God, does it not mean for such a man that the old things are back upon him once more, the old sin, the old fear, the old desolation of soul? In a moment the whole life of such a man becomes keen towards God, and altogether willing. He feels bound to Christ by an awful yet blessed secret. And after the sudden anguish has passed his heart is filled to breaking with

[1] W. R. Nicoll, *Sunday Evening*, 131.

new fresh love and gratitude. "Lord, what wouldst Thou have me to do."[1]

Lord, many times I am aweary quite
Of mine own self, my sin, my vanity—
Yet be not Thou, or I am lost outright,
Weary of me.

And hate against myself I often bear,
And enter with myself in fierce debate:
Take Thou my part against myself, nor share
In that just hate.

Best friends might loathe us, if what things perverse
We know of our own selves, they also knew:
Lord, Holy One! if Thou who knowest worse
Shouldst loathe us too![2]

(2) It is because in trying to do the best we can it often seems, as regards direct and immediate effects and with reference only to a limited period of time and a limited portion of human society, as if we were contending against nature itself, that we are so apt to lose heart in well-doing. To prevent this consequence of taking a narrow view of things, the best that can be done is to take a wider view, namely, that development, progress, is the law of human life and society, though the process may seem to be, and in point of fact is, slow and unequal. In trying to do the best we can, in never losing heart in the business, we are partners with the Eternal in accelerating that process, however it may seem that our effort and endeavour is for the time unavailing and abortive. However it may seem to be fighting against nature and the course of things, it is in reality, and in a wider view, working out the eternal order, to keep on trying to do our best in the face of all difficulties and reverses. That is a view of things to the truth of which history is a witness. There is progress, though it is slow. To take that view, and to give it the place which it ought to hold in all our thoughts, is the best provision that can be made by us against the great calamity of losing heart in well-doing.

¶ Of course the world is growing better; the Lord reigns; our old planet is wheeling slowly into fuller light. I despair of

[1] J. A. Hutton, *The Fear of Things*, 184. [2] R. C. Trench, *Poems*, 147.

nothing good. All will come in due time that is really needed. All we have to do is to work—and wait.[1]

¶ I do not make much of "Progress of the Species," as handled in these times of ours; nor do I think you would care to hear much about it. The talk on that subject is too often of the most extravagant, confused sort. Yet I may say, the fact itself seems certain enough; nay we can trace-out the inevitable necessity of it in the nature of things.[2]

## II.

### An Encouraging Promise.

**"We shall reap, if we faint not."**

1. *The certainty of reaping.*—We feel that nothing less than such a declaration is necessary, in order to raise us above so much that sometimes makes true Christian well-doing morally impossible. But this declaration, grasped as a special word of God by the hand often so worn and weary, is also perfectly sufficient, in spite of all that threatens or oppresses us, to make us "stedfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord." The good, much or little, which in God's name and power we are permitted to accomplish here, what is it else than sowing? and can that sowing ever be too much, when we can reckon on an abundant and joyful harvest? Yes, reckon; for the word of God, which lies before us, is faithful and worthy of all acceptation. The farmer sows with quiet industry, although his prospect of the joy of harvest is far from certain. When but a few days divide the grain from the sickle, the tempest or the hail-shower may suddenly annihilate his fairest hopes. But the labourer for the Kingdom of God not only hopes, but is assured through faith that his harvest is perfectly guaranteed through the power and faithfulness of the Lord.

There is a true but somewhat disheartening word, that one sows and another reaps. We sow and our successors reap. This is well, but it is not the whole. We shall reap; we shall discover one day that all the good seed we have sown has sprung, and our one sorrow will be that we did not sow more diligently. As for

[1] J. G. Whittier, in *Life*, by S. T. Pickard, ii. 673.
[2] Carlyle, *Heroes and Hero-Worship*.

the apparent frustration and delay, we shall look back in the world to come along the track of tears, and see the rainbow of God upon it, and perceive that by these disappointments and defeats He was interpreting to us all the while the wonder of the secret life.

¶ Some of us have learned what it means to continue in well-doing without weariness, but we have not learned along with that to look for the harvest. We think that lesson has been forced upon us. Our patient continuance in well-doing has gained us no praise, our service of love has been requited by indifference, or even persecution, by those on whom it has been lavished. "That is the harvest of well-doing," we say, with perhaps a touch of bitterness. "If we are to continue in it, it will not be in the hope of harvest, but solely for the sake of the well-doing itself." "Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles?" asked our Master. Nay, verily! And neither shall we gather thorns of grapes. The fruit of patience is not disappointment; the result of endurance in well-doing is not bitterness; the harvest of love is not pain. Foolish and faithless that we are! God and nature never brought forth such a harvest from such seed. The harvest of well-doing is the harvest of the realization of our highest hopes, a harvest of pure and never-failing joy, a harvest of all-satisfying love. In due season, for the seasons haste not nor lag for all our impatience, we shall reap that harvest if we faint not.[1]

¶ A joiner takes two pieces of wood, and with infinite care glues them in position. But unless he follows up his perseverance with patience, his working with waiting, he will make a sorry cabinet. The husbandman tends his vine, pruning and purging it day after day as he alone knows how. But unless he "waits for the precious fruit of the earth, being patient over it," he will never cut one luscious bunch of grapes. A sculptor moulds his clay; day and night he toils strenuously and hard. But before his dream is realized, days of waiting for that clay to harden must follow nights of working at that clay to shapen. A small group of politicians, amongst whom was William Pitt, were busy in conversation, when somehow or other the subject of their talk turned, and a discussion arose as to which was the quality most needed in a Prime Minister. "Eloquence," said one; "Knowledge," suggested another; "Toil," was the opinion of a third. "No," said Pitt, who had learned from experience, "it is patience." Carpenter, farmer, sculptor, minister: to join wood, to grow grapes, to mould a statue, to govern a country—if patience is a great essential with

[1] A. H. Moncur Sime.

these in their work, how much more is it essential with well-doers in theirs![1]

2. *The time of reaping.*—In due season we shall gain our victory and His, and we shall reap our harvest. The months before the ingathering may often seem long and wearisome, and verily be heart-breaking things, but God's "seasons" are not always measurable by our forecastings, even though the harvest is pledged by His oath and His promise. We shall reap the growth effectuated by His Holy Spirit, though we may not always understand the nature of the gracious sheaves that we are bringing in our bosom. We cannot calculate the hour or the nature of our triumph, but we know that the word of God stands sure, and that the due season draws nigh. We know that we *shall* reap if we faint not.

Let us not forget that God must be the judge of the "due time." We are often in a hurry; God never is. Perhaps the greatest miracle in Christ's life is that He should wait thirty years before performing a miracle. He bided His time. Undue haste pays the penalty of speedy decay. Did we know all the reasons as God knows them we should always approve of His seeming delay. How few converts, apparently, there were in Christ's personal ministry! but one sermon on the day of Pentecost brings three thousand to Jesus' feet. Soon the number increased so rapidly that Luke ceases to give us figures. Carey and his companions must labour seven years before the first Hindu convert is baptized. Judson must toil on until the churches grow disheartened, and everything but his own faith and God's promise fails. In a single recent year eighteen thousand are baptized in connexion with work on these same foreign fields! These things are not accidental. They have their reasons. We cannot always trace the law. God can. Let us do our duty, and leave the result with Him.

¶ It is one of the appointed conditions of the labour of men that, in proportion to the time between the seed sowing and the harvest, is the fulness of the fruit; and that generally, therefore, the farther off we place our aim, and the less we desire to be the witnesses of what we have laboured for, the more wide and rich will be the measure of our success.[2]

[1] W. S. Kelynack. [2] Ruskin, *Seven Lamps of Architecture.*

My new-cut ashlar takes the light
Where crimson-blank the windows flare;
By my own work, before the night,
Great Overseer, I make my prayer.

If there be good in that I wrought,
Thy hand compelled it, Master, Thine:
Where I have failed to meet Thy thought,
I know, through Thee, the blame is mine.

One instant's toil to Thee denied
Stands all Eternity's offence,
Of what I did with Thee to guide,
To Thee, through Thee, be excellence.

Who, lest all thought of Eden fade,
Bring'st Eden to the craftsman's brain,
Godlike to muse o'er his own trade,
And Manlike stand with God again.

The depth and dream of my desire,
The bitter paths wherein I stray,
Thou knowest who hast made the fire,
Thou knowest who hast made the clay.

One stone the more swings to her place
In that dread Temple of Thy Worth—
It is enough that through Thy grace
I saw naught common on Thy earth.

Take not that vision from my ken;
Oh, whatsoe'er may spoil or speed,
Help me to need no aid from men,
That I may help such men as need![1]

3. *The condition of reaping.*—We have an encouraging promise. But a condition is also suggested. We must not faint. We must persevere to the end. There must be no repining, no retreating, no fainting. We enlist for life, for eternity indeed. The dew of youth, the vigour of manhood, and the wisdom of age must be consecrated to well-doing. It is "to them who by patient continuance in well doing seek for glory and honour and immortality," that the promise of blessedness is given.

[1] Rudyard Kipling.

Slothfulness in the summer may frustrate all the labour of the spring; and may even in the harvest of life have lost the gain of summer. The last few paces of our field may be perhaps the heaviest; but those who give up now might as well have left all the rest undone.

¶ One of the sterling virtues in practical life is continuance—continuance through all obstacles, hindrances, and discouragements. It is unconquerable persistence that wins. The paths of life are strewn with the skeletons of those who fainted and fell in the march. Life's prizes can be won only by those who will not fail. Success in every field must be reached through antagonism and conflict.[1]

¶ Ruskin, in a letter written to his Oxford tutor after he had left the University, gives an account of what he did not learn there. He says his teachers should have said to him, when he was an undergraduate, "In all your studies, we have only one request to make you, and that we expect you scrupulously to comply with: That you work with *patience* as well as diligence, and take care to secure every step you take: we do not care how much or how little you do—but let what you do, *be done for ever*."[2]

[1] J. R. Miller.

[2] E. T. Cook, *The Life of Ruskin*, i. 81.

# Glorying in the Cross.

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## Glorying in the Cross.

**But far be it from me to glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, through which the world hath been crucified unto me, and I unto the world.—Gal. vi. 14.**

1. Early in the Apostolic age Judaizing teachers appeared in the churches, who, by the dissemination of principles which were subversive of the gospel, beguiled disciples from the simplicity of Christ, and produced discord and division among the brethren. The error which they propagated in the churches of Galatia was so prolific of evil that it sapped the foundation of the sinner's hope toward God, poisoned and petrified that flowing fountain which had been opened at the cross "for sin and for uncleanness," nullified the proclamation of free pardon which the gospel carries on its loving bosom to all the children of the Fall, thwarted the benevolent purposes of Jehovah, and robbed the redeeming Saviour of that glory which was due to Him for the matchless work He had achieved "for us men and for our salvation." The error consisted in preaching circumcision as essential to salvation. They "taught the brethren, and said, Except ye be circumcised after the manner of Moses, ye cannot be saved." Their object, says St. Paul, was to make a fair show in the flesh and to avoid persecution.

The "cross" seemed a hindrance to their success, and therefore they hid it out of sight as much as possible; but all the time they were compromising a principle, and there was nothing in this mere outward conformity that could help men to an inward life of truth and grace. It was all a question of trifles, of a mere glorying in the flesh; but, says the Apostle, "Far be it from me to glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, through which the world hath been crucified unto me, and I unto the world."

2. St. Paul's passionate declaration sums up in itself all the positive teaching of the letter to the Galatians; it is this—that

his soul makes her boast in the cross of Jesus Christ; that for the exaltation of this cross of Jesus he will cast everything aside—his past, his reputation among his own people, the future grandeur of the historic Israel, all that the world might reasonably be expected to offer to an innocent ambition. And what made this declaration so potent with the Galatians and all others to whom he addressed it was that it was a fact of experience. For these words represent the deliberate convictions at which the Apostle had arrived after much thought and long experience. So far from being the outcome merely of a passing mood, they tell of a growing intensity of feeling and of a belief deeply rooted in knowledge. It is quite true that the experience which lies behind the words was an exceptional one, and that they represent a very lofty level of life and thought. But to the man who uttered them they were real, and though for us they may seem to point to an ideal, it is at least one that we may count to be attainable.

3. St. Paul makes the cross the measure of all things. He brings the world and all the glories of the world to the cross, and weighs them there as in a balance, and he finds them wanting. Now let us try to understand what St. Paul means by the cross, and not put too narrow a limitation upon it. It was not the piece of wood, or the physical sufferings of the Divine Victim, or the painful, shameful death of the crucifixion scene. St. Paul, when he spoke of the cross, saw before him the vision of a splendid and a fruitful Life, crowned by a tragic end. To him the cross of Jesus Christ included all that was covered by the incarnation of the Son of God and the redemption of man. The whole life and work of Jesus Christ—His pure and holy manhood, His Divine wisdom, His tender sympathy, His saving grace, His glorious sacrifice, His risen power—all was summed up for the Apostle in the single word, the Cross.

¶ The very Rev. old Ebenezer Brown I have twice heard preach, and a most interesting exhibition it is; he is a specimen of old Presbyterian eloquence and style. There is something very dignified in his energetic yet subdued manner; his old broad Scotch, his deep sonorous voice, rendered very inarticulate now from old age, but famed in his youth for reaching a mile at open air preachings; and oh how fain would he that it reached many and many a mile, if he could but bring poor sinners to his loved

Saviour! Somehow, every word he utters melts me to tears; Christ crucified is all his theme, all his salvation, and all his desire. Humility, simplicity, serene peace, and that single repose in the Saviour which has brought the spirit of Jesus so eminently and so purely into his heart and life, are what characterize this aged saint. The pathos, the spirit, the unction of his preaching, surpasses all eloquence, and is overcoming to an unutterable degree; none could imitate it, none could ever equal it, unless imbued with the same spirit from on high.[1]

## I.

### The Cross and Christianity.

Christianity is the religion of the cross. Its subject-matter is called the cross. Its Author and Lord is the incarnate, risen, and exalted Son of God who died upon the cross. Its aim—salvation—is accomplished through the cross. The true instinct of Christendom has echoed St. Paul's words, and accepted this his spiritual ultimatum. The cross—not the holy cradle or the broken tomb—has always been its chosen, its prized and beloved emblem. It rises over the Christian Sanctuary, ornamented in richness, and wreathed into forms of beauty. It was once an emblem of shame, all and more than all that the gallows is to us; but now it is the sacred form which men delight to enrich with their jewels and their gold, or even to mould to lovely shapes, in which its own roughness seems almost lost. Outwardly at least, all Christendom has gloried in the cross. But such glorying, such rejoicing in the cross, marks a joy which has in it an undercurrent of seriousness.

Taking this tone and spirit of glorying for granted as the only one which becomes a Christian, surely we can see very clearly, and feel deeply, why we should glory in the cross. There are grounds upon which every disciple may take his stand in echoing the language of the Apostle—reasons why he should declare his determination to glory in nothing else save the cross, why he should refuse to bring into comparison or competition with it anything, however illustrious it may be, of an earthly or human nature.

[1] *Letters of Thomas Erskine of Linlathen*, i. 360.

¶ The more it is pondered, the more the power of Christianity is found to lie in the cross. The incarnate Christ, the risen and exalted Christ, and all His mysterious presence among us and experiences in our midst, become intelligible when we find Him acting for us and upon us by His death on the cross, acting in us and through us, by awakening in us the very spirit that led Him to the cross. Of course the cross does not say all. It is but a symbol, and no symbol can. But "the very power of a symbol lies in the sublime inadequacy and yet practical effectiveness of its suggestion." And this symbol is associated so intimately with the great critical, crucial event in the Saviour's work for the world's salvation that we are not surprised that the gospel is called the word of the cross. The cross symbolizes the service He did for us. It symbolizes the nature of the service He expects of us. And if it reminds us that the ideal life for man is no smooth, easy progress over carpeted tracks, but strenuous, arduous, often wrestling with things repellent and cruel, it tells us, too, that Christ asks nothing of His followers harder than that which He has faced for them of His own gracious will, for

> Not in soft speech is told the earthly story,
> Love of all Loves! that showed Thee for an hour;
> Shame was Thy kingdom, and reproach Thy glory,
> Death Thine eternity, the Cross Thy power.[1]

1. *The cross gives us a new conception of God.*—Mankind before Christ went about, in St. Paul's phrase, "groping after" God, as one gropes in the dark for an object suspected to be there yet nowhere to be found. He was not far, to be sure, from any one of them. Yet they had to "seek God, if haply they might feel after him, and find him." And they would hopelessly strive to pierce through the darkness which surrounds the throne of the Almighty, and, even were they successful in finding God, they would not find the Father. But the light streaming from the cross dispels all the mist, and actually lays bare the very heart of the Eternal One in its paternal longings for men. All His revelations in the Old Testament, His ordinances, institutions, promises, judgments, reach their fulfilment and find their real explanation in the cross. More than that, all the hints of truth current among heathen nations—all their sighing and striving after the knowledge of God and communion with Him, all attempts to

[1] R. J. Drummond, *Faith's Certainties*, 145.

get rid of the consciousness of guilt, to atone for sin, and to effect a perfect restoration to Divine favour—in short, everything regarding the nature of God and His designs which glimmered as a ray of light here and there in this darkness obtains in Christ and in Christ crucified its goal, because in Him it finds its full manifestation. In the cross we have revealed most perfectly every one of the Divine attributes, and, in the very forefront, the completeness of the Divine understanding of, and the intensity of the Divine sympathy with, human suffering and sorrow.

¶ In one of his sonnets in the *Vita Nuova*, Dante instils the essence of sympathy into two lines. Speaking of one who offered him comfort in his great grief over the death of Beatrice, he says,

> Our life revives, since one doth now console
> Who sorrows with us, healing grief with grief.

That goes to the heart of things. The sympathy that we feel to be most real is that which has behind it a kindred experience—can heal grief with grief.

¶ By what has Christianity subdued the world if not by the apotheosis of grief, by its marvellous transmutation of suffering into triumph, of the crown of thorns into the crown of glory, and of a gibbet into a symbol of salvation? What does the apotheosis of the cross mean if not the death of death, the defeat of sin, the beatification of martyrdom, the raising to the skies of voluntary sacrifice, the defiance of pain?—"O Death, where is thy sting? O Grave, where is thy victory?" By long brooding over this theme—the agony of the just, peace in the midst of agony, and the heavenly beauty of such peace—humanity came to understand that a new religion was born, a new mode, that is to say, of explaining life and of understanding suffering.[1]

> "What shall I ask for Thee, my Child?"
> Said Mary Mother, stooping down
> Above the Babe all undefiled.
> "O let Him wear a kingly crown."
>
> From wise men's gifts she wrought the crown,
> The robe inwove with many a gem;
> Beside the Babe she laid them down.
> He wept and would have none of them.

[1] *Amiel's Journal* (trans. by Mrs. Humphry Ward), 167.

"What shall I get for Thee, my Child?"
Unto the door she slowly went,
And wove a crown of thorn-boughs wild:
He took it up, and was content.

Upon the floor she gathered wood,
And made a little Cross for Him;
The Child smiled for He understood,
And Mary watched with eyes grown dim.

"Since these He doth prefer to gold,"
She sadly said, "Let it be so;
He sees what I cannot behold,
He knows what I can never know."

That night the eyes of Mary saw
A Cross of stars set in the sky,
Which after it the heavens did draw,
And this to her was God's reply.[1]

2. *The cross gives us a new hope.*—Not only does the cross reveal the Divine nature and the Divine purpose, but it is the great and efficient means by which this Divine purpose is carried out. On the cross atonement is made for sin, pardon is procured for the sinner, the work of grace is carried out to its last requisite, and everything perfected that belongs to the plan of redemption. Through the cross we have our consciences purged from dead works. We have a right to enter the holy place through His blood. We stand in the presence of the burning glory of the Shechinah, unabashed, unashamed, accepted in the Beloved, for we know that "there is no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus."

It is evident that St. Paul is here contemplating the Redeemer's work in this vital aspect of it. He speaks in the next verse (ver. 15) of "a new creature"—that renewal of the heart which is everything in personal religion, and without which all mere rites and ceremonies are utterly worthless. And he manifestly traces the power which produces a new birth and new life to the cross of Christ. It is there that the opened eye of the heart first learns that God is not eager to punish, but generous to atone:

[1] W. J. Dawson, *The Empire of Love*, 120.

that our sins in the past offer no longer a hopeless bar to our return to His favour; that on the contrary, He waits to receive and is prompt to forgive us for Jesus' sake.

¶ The cross of Christ is no longer to you the symbol of a bargain between a vindictive Deity and a self-sacrificing Deity, between the individual and selected Soul and the Trinity, but the expression of the great truth of life that self-renunciation, the way of the cross, is the only pathway in spiritual life, and that not as a duty or a trial, but as the only means of freedom, hope and joy. People will tell you Buddha taught this, and that all the ascetics have taught the same; but their teaching was not like Christ's. They wanted to kill self, an impossible feat. He meant the self to be lost in love for others, and devotion to them; that by the miracle of spiritual life the lost self should return on the great spiral of progress to its old point in the plane, but to such elevation in height that it shines with immortality, and light, and love as with the garments of God's Kingdom. This was the joy that was set before Him. This is the unhoped, unexpected joy set before our dim eyes. God help us to attain it, and in this we make no selfish prayer, for so truly is God love that He has made the condition of our progress (as James Hinton so well says) "others' needs," no selfish and self-sympathizing isolation and introspection, no weary attempts to perfect the self by the self. Thank God, the cross sweeps all those hardnesses away; and you in Dumbarton and I in Buenos Ayres, this busy and excited town, can live the life better than any hermit. And we won't shrink from any suffering and anxiety He, in His love, puts before us, knowing that these things and His sweet love bring us into the fellowship of suffering, the world's suffering, little understood and little aided.[1]

¶ Natural and supernatural constitute a universal order and an everyday process. It is by such a path, beginning in the lowest forms of nature, that Bushnell finds his way up to holiness as God's last end; and when that is gained, it will be seen that it is the culmination of a process that embraces all the stages of creation. The redeeming work of Christ will not appear as an intrusion into a continuous order, but only as another and a supreme instance of the supernatural entering into the natural. "The cross of redemption is no after-thought, but is itself the grand all-dominating idea around which the eternal system of God crystallizes."[2]

[1] W. Denny, in *Life*, by A. B. Bruce, 430.
[2] T. T. Munger, *Horace Bushnell*, 216.

Thee such loveliness adorns
On Thy Cross, O my Desire—
As a lily Thou art among thorns,
As a rose lies back against his briar.

Thou art as a fair, green shoot,
That along the wall doth run;
Thou art as a welcoming open fruit,
Stretched forth to the glory of the sun.

Thou art still as one in sleep,
As the blood that Thou dost shed;
Thou art as a precious coral-reef
That scarce lifteth himself from his bed.

Thy limbs are so fine, so long,
'Mid the cords and nails that bind,
Thy body maketh a solemn song,
As a stream in a gorge confined.[1]

## II.

### The Cross and the World.

The Apostle rationalizes his boasting, and therefore gives it weight and value, by defining clearly to himself and to his friends the meaning, the inwardness of the cross: "Through which," he says, "the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world."

1. The "world" here does not mean simply the ordinary occupations and interests of human life. St. Paul was by no means dead to these things. On the contrary, he was a particularly active member of society, and succeeded in profoundly influencing the world. And in this respect at least he would have all Christians follow his example. What he is thinking of here is not so much the life as the thought, the spirit, the ambitions of this present world. It is the whole sensuous and material aspect of things that he here sees in contradiction to the spiritual. St. Paul's "Cosmos" is the material universe, the sphere of external ordinances. He has ever in his view the evil influence of certain teachers who, afraid of the

[1] Michael Field, *Mystic Trees*, 35.

offence of the cross, sought to belittle it, and to hold up the old ceremonialism of the Jewish law as of equal account.

2. St. Paul himself could have gloried in his Jewish nationality —"an Hebrew of the Hebrews." In those old days he had gloried in the law and the covenant and the promises. He had felt himself specially favoured of Heaven in having received, as he thought, a mandate to defend the faith of Israel and punish her enemies. He threw himself with vigour into the crusade against Christians; he was eager to obey the law to the last letter; he revelled in the esteem of his elders, and strove eagerly to win new laurels of praise.

But he forsook that career when he heard the words, "Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?" Up to the point of his meeting with Jesus his whole life had been one long effort to obtain a sure sense of freedom and of the favour of God. For this he had toiled and fought and prayed. And when he found in the cross of Jesus Christ his highest hopes realized, and that which he had striven so desperately to earn offered to him as a free gift and won for him at the price of an infinite sacrifice, his joy and wonder, his gratitude and adoration, knew no bounds.

3. This new relationship between St. Paul and God involved necessarily a new relation between himself and the world around him. The gospel of the cross the Apostle had to preach not by words only but also by his life. We may be sure that his preaching would have been in vain if his way through life had not been beset with difficulties and hindrances. He has himself told us of the troubles which beset him on every hand—of the thirst and weariness, of the stripes and imprisonments, of the watchings and fastings, which he had to endure, as he was going about doing His Master's work. St. Paul's life was one long life of crucifixion. All that he loved, desired, and wished to attain was cast down, until at last he lay in the dark dungeon at Rome, waiting for the executioner that should lead him to his Lord. And all this he found to be a daily uplifting into a diviner life. The very submission to the cross of suffering brought him into such closer and closer union with Christ that the Divine life of Christ became incarnate in him. Conscious that his inner life was sustained by the Divine Spirit of Jesus, he could say, "It is not I that live, but

Christ liveth in me." And inasmuch as, like his dear Lord, he had been uplifted into the higher life of union with the Divine on the cross of suffering, as he was conscious that what was foreshadowed for all in the sacrifice and glorification of the human nature of our Lord was being accomplished in himself, he could also say, "Far be it from me to glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ."

¶ If we have not got a cross, alas! we may conclude that we have not got Christ, for it is the first of His gifts.[1]

¶ Crucify the rebellious self, mortify yourself wholly, give up all to God, and the peace which is not of this world will descend upon you. For eighteen centuries no grander word has been spoken; and although humanity is for ever seeking after a more exact and complete application of justice, yet her secret faith is not in justice but in pardon, for pardon alone conciliates the spotless purity of perfection with the infinite pity due to weakness —that is to say, it alone preserves and defends the idea of holiness, while it allows full scope to that of love. The Gospel proclaims the ineffable consolation, the good news, which disarms all earthly griefs, and robs even death of its terrors—the news of irrevocable pardon, that is to say, of eternal life. The cross is the guarantee of the gospel. Therefore it has been its standard.[2]

Thy Cross cruciferous doth flower in all
And every cross, dear Lord, assigned to us:
Ours lowly-statured crosses; Thine how tall,
Thy Cross cruciferous.

Thy Cross alone life-giving, glorious:
For love of Thine, souls love their own when small,
Easy and light, or great and ponderous.

Since deep calls deep, Lord, hearken when we call;
When cross calls Cross racking and emulous:—
Remember us with him who shared Thy gall,
Thy Cross cruciferous.[3]

[1] "Rabbi" Duncan, in *Recollections* by A. Moody Stuart, 219.
[2] *Amiel's Journal* (trans. by Mrs. Humphry Ward), 168.
[3] Christina G. Rossetti, *Poetical Works*, 167.

# The Marks of Jesus.

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## The Marks of Jesus

**From henceforth let no man trouble me: for I bear branded on my body the marks of Jesus.—Gal. vi. 17.**

The Apostle was growing an old man. He was stamped and marked by life. The wounds of his conflicts, the furrows of his years, were on him. And all these wounds and furrows had come to him since the great change of his life. They were closely bound up with the service of his Master. Every scar must still have quivered with the earnestness of the words of Christian loyalty which brought the blow that made it. See what he calls these scars, then. "I bear branded on my body the marks of Jesus." He had a figure in his mind. He was thinking of the way in which a master branded his slaves. Burnt into their very flesh, they carried the initial of their master's name, or some other sign that they belonged to him, that they were not their own. That mark on the slave's body kept any other but his own master from touching him or compelling his labour. It was the sign at once of his servitude to one master and of his freedom from all others. St. Paul says that these marks in his flesh, which signify his servitude to Jesus, are the witnesses of his freedom from every other service. Since he is responsible to his Master, he is responsible to no one else.

¶ The *stigmata* are the marks of ownership branded on the Apostle's body. These *stigmata* were used: (1) In the case of domestic slaves. With these, however, branding was not usual, at least among the Greeks and Romans, except to mark out such as had attempted to escape or had otherwise misconducted themselves, hence called "stigmatized (literati)," and such brands were held to be a badge of disgrace. (2) Slaves attached to some temple or persons devoted to the service of some deity were so branded. (3) Captives were so treated in very rare cases. (4) Soldiers sometimes branded the name of their commander on some part of their body. The metaphor here is most

appropriate, if referred to the second of these classes. Such a practice at all events cannot have been unknown in a country which was the home of the worship of Cybele. A temple slave is mentioned in a Galatian inscription. The brands of which the Apostle speaks were doubtless the permanent marks which he bore of persecution undergone in the service of Christ.[1]

¶ In the Roman Empire when a slave ran away, if he was caught, his owner might have him stripped, the irons heated, and the letters "FVG." (*fugitivus*) branded upon him. Perhaps the owner's initials might be burnt on the slave, too. The practice long survived in France, where convicts were branded "V" (*voleur*), or "TF" (*travail forcé*), and people took their children to see it done as a lesson in virtue. The historian, Herodotus, tells us that in Egypt, if a slave were dissatisfied with his master, he might go to the temple of Herakles and take on him the stigmata of the god, and be free for ever of his master and belong to the god. Such marks were indelible.[2]

¶ The branding was a mark of shame. No man was branded of his own free will—apart from slaves taking on them such a brand as that of Herakles, which was to exchange one servitude for another. To be the slave of Jesus Christ had not been Paul's intention. The shame of bearing Christ's name—of being "made as the filth of the world, the off-scouring of all things" (1 Cor. iv. 13)—the loss of home and family and friendships, of everything (Phil. iii. 8)—the squalid life of privation, insult, persecution and danger—humiliation from beginning to end—no man would have chosen it, and Paul did not choose it. It was a vocation: "Necessity is laid upon me; yea, woe is unto me, if I preach not the gospel! For if I do this thing willingly, I have a reward: but if against my will, I am entrusted with a stewardship" (1 Cor. ix. 16, 17). A steward was very often a slave, if not always. Paul is at the beck and call of another whom he never chose to make his Master. He must have no will of his own. "Go into the city, and it shall be told thee what thou must do" (Acts ix. 6),—so far was he from choosing a vocation, he has to wait for his orders.

The two responsibilities go together—the servant is responsible to the Master, and the Master to the servant. The very stigmata themselves become so many promises. The body is marked all over with signs of the Master's use, as a favourite book, which a man reads often, shows most signs of wear—pencilled in here and

[1] J. B. Lightfoot, *St. Paul's Epistle to the Galatians*, 225.
[2] T. R. Glover, *Vocation*, 36.

there, crushed, worn and shabby, and in all these things identified with the reader who cannot do without it. The battered body and the tried and weary spirit are reminders themselves to Paul that "Christ liveth in me."[1]

## I.

### Outward Marks.

Every Christian man or woman ought to bear in his or her body, in a plain, literal sense, the tokens that he or she belongs to Jesus Christ. You ask how? "If thy right hand offend thee, cut it off, and cast it from thee." There are things in our physical nature that we have to suppress; that we have always to regulate and coerce; that we have sometimes entirely to cast away and do without, if we mean to be Jesus Christ's at all. The old law of self-denial, of subduing the animal nature, its passions, appetites, desires, is as true and as needful to-day as it ever was; and for us all it is essential to the loftiness and purity of our Christian life that our animal nature and our fleshly constitution should be well kept down under heel and subdued. If we are not living a life of self-denial, if we are not crucifying the flesh with its affections and lusts, if we are not "bearing about in the body the dying of Jesus, that the life also of Christ may be manifested in our body," what tokens are there that we are Christ's slaves at all?

¶ The marks of Christ are brands burnt into the very body, so no outward thing will satisfy; nothing that your hands have done, nothing that the world can measure, for it is beneath all the dress and apparel of a so-called religious life, of which the world takes cognizance. They are part and parcel of yourself, so they can be nothing which can be taken up and laid down at will. They are inseparable, like flesh of your flesh and bone of your bone. You may be stripped of all else, like a body washed ashore, but by these shall it be known whether you are Christ's or no.[2]

¶ At the Cross, Bunyan tells us, Christian received four gifts from the angels—peace, new raiment, a mark, and a sealed roll. The mark, like the raiment, has to do with the outward appearance, but it is more intimately connected with the individuality of the man than the new garments. It seems to stand for something distinguishable by others, which is in a stricter sense

[1] T. R. Glover, *Vocation*, 37. [2] Canon Furse.

ourselves than even our character is—a subtle change wrought upon the very personality by the Cross of Christ, as the marks of the Cross were printed upon St. Francis of Assisi in the familiar incident of the stigmata. In the Bible there are such references as the mark of Cain; the mark of Ezekiel's man with the slaughter-weapon; the mark of the beast and the mark in the foreheads of the chosen ones, recorded in Revelation. All these illustrate in various ways the subtle change in men, recognizable by others, produced by supreme experiences of good and evil.[1]

1. Here is a man whose restless spirit, whose keen hungry eye, whose hard face, whose metallic voice, tells the story of a sordid soul. Do we need to ask anything about his master? We know, as we listen to him, as we look into his face, that he has a craving for money; that his life is spent in following the god of gold, and worshipping in the temple of mammon. Mammon is his master, and he bears branded upon his body the "stigmata" of the master he serves. Here is one whose bloated face, feverish lips, and furtive glance tell of sensuality. The vice seems to have petrified on the countenance. Not a finger-touch of God seems to be left there. We know the name of the master that man serves. He bears branded upon his sensual face the marks of the master whose slave he is. The name of his master is lust. Here is another whose mien betokens a lofty indifference and a contemptuous disregard for others, and an unquestioning appropriation of the best of everything. Those haughty looks tell the story of a life completely dominated by pride. Here is another whose face is scarred and marred with anguish. It says, as you look at it, "I am a man who has seen affliction." The furrowed face, wrinkled brow, and sunken cheeks tell of a life that has been trodden by the hoof of sorrow. We know that the man has spent long years in the school of sorrow; he bears on his body the "stigmata" of pain.

¶ We are spinning our own fates, good or evil, and never to be undone. Every smallest stroke of virtue or of vice leaves its never so little scar. The drunken Rip Van Winkle, in Jefferson's play, excuses himself for every fresh dereliction by saying, "I won't count this time!" Well! he may not count it, and a kind Heaven may not count it; but it is being counted none the less. Down among his nerve cells and fibres the molecules are counting

[1] John Kelman, *The Road*, i. 72.

it, registering it, and storing it up to be used against him when the next temptation comes. Nothing we ever do is, in strict scientific literalness, wiped out. Of course, this has its good side as well as its bad one. As we become permanent drunkards by so many separate drinks, so we become saints in the moral, and authorities and experts in the practical and scientific, spheres by so many separate acts and hours of work.[1]

¶ In one of Tolstoy's books he represents an ideal Czar who keeps open house and table for all comers. But the guests had to face one condition—each man had to show his hands before sitting down to the feast. Those whose hands were rough and hard with honest toil were welcomed to the best of the board, but those whose hands were soft and white had only the crusts and crumbs. The hands were the index of the soul. The hard rough hands told the story of toil, sacrifice, and suffering, and it was for these the best of the feast was spread.[2]

2. The face of a Christian disciple should testify to the grace of God within. It is a matter of constant observation that strong ruling emotions of heart do come, in time, to stamp themselves upon the countenance. Sometimes we see a face that speaks of beaming kindliness, or of sweet, devout, and holy peace. What God wants is that His character should be so stamped upon the lives of all His children that every observer of their daily walk should recognize in them what is really Divine.

¶ After the death of the saintly McCheyne, a letter addressed to him was found in his locked desk, a letter he had shown to no one while he lived. It was from one who wrote to tell him that he had been the means of leading him to Christ, and in it were these words, "It was nothing that you *said* that first made me wish to be a Christian, it was the beauty of holiness which I saw in your very face."[3]

## II.

### Spiritual Marks.

1. While it is true that the primary reference of the text is to the scars of old and recent wounds which St. Paul had endured in the service of Christ, these were not the only "marks of Jesus" that he bore. After all, the true marks of Jesus are not

[1] W. James, *Principles of Psychology*, i. 127.
[2] J. G. Mantle, *God's To-morrow*, 38.
[3] G. H. Knight, *Divine Upliftings*, 159.

outward but inward, not physical but spiritual. It was the Apostle Paul himself who said, "If any man hath not the spirit of Christ, he is none of his." And in St. Paul's own case, the wounds he bore, while in some respects the most striking, were not the deepest and most convincing "marks" of Jesus. The final and absolutely decisive proof that St. Paul belonged to Christ was that he had the spirit of Christ and that Christ lived over again in him.

The brand of Christ may be upon the mind and heart as truly as upon the body: on the mind, in the effort we make to subdue our natural arrogance and pride into humbleness and faith; on the heart, in the loving pity we have for the misfortunes of others. Are our minds no longer conformed to the spirit of the world, but transformed to the image of the Son; so that the mind that was in Christ is the mind that is in us? Are our hearts thus quick to suffer in the suffering of others, as His was, who by force of sympathy bore our grief and carried our sorrows? Therein only can we rest, thus only be at peace about ourselves; and as we pass through the detractions and misunderstandings of this world, and as we journey down the long road whose goal is death, we can learn to say, "Let no man trouble me—let me not even be troubled for myself—I have the marks of Christ, I know whom I have believed, and who shall separate me from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus, my Lord?" To have the marks, the brands, the stigmata, the open proofs of self-surrender and self-sacrifice—that alone counts.

¶ There is a tendency, even in these days, to think Christ's "marks" are external and mechanical. We think sometimes that the "mark" of a Christian is that he observes the Sabbath and attends church services and belongs to some ecclesiastical organization. I do not disparage the Sabbath and church attendance and membership. But these external things are not the "real" marks of Jesus. Did not Jesus Himself say that a man may have all manner of Church guarantees and certificates and be none of His? Did He not say, "Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy by thy name, and by thy name cast out devils, and by thy name do many mighty works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity." No, it is not the crucifix on the watch-chain, or the "S.A." on the collar, or the name on the church roll that constitutes the marks of Jesus. The marks are

inward and spiritual. They are certain features of character, and especially these three, obedience, love, sacrifice. Indeed, our Lord Himself emphasized and underlined these three things as being, above all others, the marks of His servants. First, *obedience.* "Whosoever shall do the will of God, the same is my brother, and sister, and mother." Secondly, *love.* "By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another." And thirdly, *sacrifice.* "If any man would come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me." Have we got these marks? Is our life characterized by an utter obedience to God, a great passion for souls, a remorseless sacrifice of self? We ask sometimes, "Hath He marks to lead me to Him, if He be my guide?" And we answer, "Yes, He has certain infallible marks: 'In His feet and hands are wound-prints, and His side.'" But there is another question: Have we the marks that single us out as His? Does the world recognize Christ's marks on us? Life always leaves its mark. The life of greed leaves its mark. The life of frivolous self-pleasing leaves its mark. The life of sin leaves its mark. And the life of Christian service leaves its mark. "They took knowledge of them, that they had been with Jesus." The world, in their courage and devotion and self-sacrifice, saw the "marks of Jesus." But more important still, does Jesus see the "marks"? "The Lord knoweth them that are his." How? By the marks. We read how, in the last great day, there will be a division and a discrimination. The great Shepherd will then gather and fold His sheep. And that is how He will know them —by the "marks." Shall we then be amongst the sheep on the right hand? It all comes back to this: Do we bear branded upon us the "marks" of Jesus—the infallible signs and tokens of His service? Do we possess that spirit of obedience to God, and love to men, and utter self-sacrifice which a real surrender of ourselves to Jesus Christ always produces? "For if any man hath not the spirit of Christ, he is none of his."[1]

> As in the Christ, though men beheld no beauty—
> Only the marks of suffering and care,
> God, from the first, beheld His own bright image
> Rejoicing in the revelation fair.
>
> So, where His children, looking on each other,
> See forms and faces marred by pain and woe,
> God, looking on the depths and not the surface,
> Sees oftentimes His likeness formed below.[2]

[1] J. D. Jones, *The Gospel of Grace*, 249.
[2] Edith H. Divall, *A Believer's Rest*, 35.

2. The "stigmata," the marks of Christ their Master, cannot be mistaken. His followers have His marks on their body, as signs that they are members of His Body, in all purity and chastity and holiness, as being "temples of the Holy Ghost." But they also have His marks on their temper, as those who have taken up their cross and borne it after Him in self-denial and mortification, in patience, in forgiveness, in humility, in cheerfulness; His marks on their soul, as being set free from condemnation by the atoning mercy of the Saviour, as being made partakers of the precious fruits of His sacrifice upon the Cross—the mark of justification, and the mark of sanctification, the imputed righteousness of Christ, the imparted and inherent righteousness wrought in them by the Holy Ghost; His marks on their spirit; being full of all spiritual affections—love, joy, peace, patience amid the trials of earth, longing for the security of Heaven, the present enjoyment of an almost perfect rest in the arms of God; in short, "a life hid with Christ in God."

I would not miss one sigh or tear,
Heart-pang, or throbbing brow;
Sweet was the chastisement severe,
And sweet its memory now.

Yes! let the fragrant scars abide,
Love-tokens in Thy stead,
Faint shadows of the spear-pierced side
And thorn-encompass'd head.

And such Thy tender force be still,
When self would swerve or stray,
Shaping to truth the froward will
Along Thy narrow way.

Deny me wealth; far, far remove
The lure of power or name;
Hope thrives in straits, in weakness love,
And faith in this world's shame.[1]

## III.

### Stigmata of the Saints.

1. The Apostle, it may be added, may have used the word "stigmata" with special reference to those marks in the body of his

[1] J. H. Newman, *Verses on Various Occasions.*

blessed Lord which were in the eyes of faith the symbol of salvation, and which love imagined to be reproduced in the disciple; those marks on which Thomas looked, and cried aloud, "My Lord, and my God." For in the heat of his love of Christ, and in the certainty of his oneness with Him, what image was more natural than that of his own heart bearing the traces of the wounds of Christ? Such a thought must have passed into the minds of many saints of God; and where legendary fancy has expressed it outwardly, in the figures of holy men receiving actually in their bodies the print of their Saviour's wounds, can we not read in the painter's art the spiritual truth, "I bear branded on my body the marks of Jesus"?

¶ St. Francis of Assisi in the year 1224 A.D. received in a trance the wound-prints of the Saviour on his body; and from that time to his death, it is reported, the saint had the physical appearance of one who had suffered crucifixion. Other instances, to the number of eighty, have been recorded in the Roman Catholic Church of the reproduction, in more or less complete form, of the five wounds of Jesus and the agonies of the cross; chiefly in the case of nuns. The last was that of Louise Lateau, who died in Belgium in the year 1883. That such phenomena have occurred there is no sufficient reason to doubt. It is difficult to assign any limits to the power of the human mind over the body in the way of sympathetic imitation. Since St. Francis' day many Romanist divines have read the Apostle's language in this sense; but the interpretation has followed rather than given rise to this fulfilment. In whatever light these manifestations may be regarded, they are a striking witness to the power of the cross over human nature. Protracted meditation on the sufferings of our Lord, aided by a lively imagination and a susceptible physique, has actually produced a rehearsal of the bodily pangs and the wound-marks of Calvary.[1]

¶ The name of a well-known scientific man having been mentioned, who, forbidden to work, occupies himself in closely watching his own case, Sir James Paget said, "It is a most dangerous thing to do that; people, by dwelling upon symptoms which they have not got, are very apt to produce them." I said: "I have been told that the stigmata might quite well be produced in that way." "Undoubtedly," he replied.[2]

[1] G. G. Findlay, *The Epistle to the Galatians*, 457.
[2] M. E. Grant-Duff, *Notes from a Diary, 1892 95*, 44.

2. There is something far better for us to do than so to contemplate the sufferings of our Lord as depicted by human art, that the stigmata may literally appear on our hands and feet. It is so to contemplate our Lord in the whole spirit of His life and service and sacrifice, and so to come under His influence, that the spirit of His life and cross shall enter into us, and we shall go away from the secret place of contemplation to reproduce His image and likeness in conduct and character—that we, "beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord," may be "changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord."

¶ In all art and literature, in every great and new creation, the impulse seems to lie in a new and vivid experience which makes a new knowledge. The man who was branded "FVG.," like the woman in Hawthorne's novel who wore the scarlet letter or the man who did not, knew something of those letters of the alphabet in quite a different way from all the rest. A burning experience and a burning memory indelible from flesh and spirit gave him those. It is somehow so that the poet learns his peculiar alphabet—something is burnt in upon him, perhaps in pain, perhaps in joy, for the joy of insight may go with pain and overwhelm it—and you get a new man, a "God-intoxicated man," like Spinoza, perhaps—or a Jacob Behmen. All knowledge is changed for him; he knew before;—no, he thought he did; but he knows now—not so many things, but the one thing in a new way that alters all. "If any man be in Christ," said Paul, "it is a new creation." All things are made new—they have new values in the new light, and none is ever again what it was before; it cannot be. Life has a new intensity, a new direction a new purpose. It becomes a vocation.[1]

I saw in Siena pictures,
Wandering wearily;
I sought not the names of the masters,
Nor the works men care to see;
But once in a low-ceiled passage
I came on a place of gloom,
Lit here and there with halos
Like saints within the room.
The pure, serene, mild colours
The early artists used
Had made my heart grow softer,
And still on peace I mused.

[1] T. R. Glover, *Vocation*, 45.

Sudden I saw the Sufferer,
And my frame was clenched with pain;
Perchance no throe so noble
Visits my soul again.
Mine were the stripes of the scourging;
On my thorn-pierced brow blood ran;
In my breast the deep compassion
Breaking the heart for man.
I drooped with heavy eyelids,
Till evil should have its will;
On my lips was silence gathered;
My waiting soul stood still.
I gazed, nor knew I was gazing;
I trembled, and woke to know
Him whom they worship in heaven
Still walking on earth below.
Once have I borne His sorrows
Beneath the flail of fate!
Once in the woe of His passion,
I felt the soul grow great!
I turned from my dead Leader;
I passed the silent door;
The grey-walled street received me:
On peace I mused no more.[1]

## IV.

### Christ's Ownership.

The ownership of Christ is one of the great realities of the Christian life. We speak of Christ as our Saviour, our Friend, our Example, our Teacher, but how seldom do we think and speak of Him as our Owner! And yet He is. We belong not to ourselves, but to Him. Our time, our talents, our money, our business, our home—all that we call our own is not so much ours as His. We were "bought with a price," and we belong to Him who bought us.

That which is abject degradation when it is rendered to a man, that which is blasphemous presumption when it is required by a

[1] G. E. Woodberry.

man, that which is impossible, in its deepest reality, as between man and man, is possible, is blessed, is joyful and strong when it is required by, and rendered to, Jesus Christ. We are His slaves if we have any living relationship to Him at all. Where, then, in the Christian life, is there a place for self-will; where a place for self-indulgence; where for murmuring or reluctance; where for the assertion of any rights of our own as against that Master? We owe absolute obedience and submission to Jesus Christ. The Christian slavery, with its abject submission, with its utter surrender and suppression of our own will, with its complete yielding up of self to the control of Jesus, who died for us; because it is based upon His surrender of Himself to us, and in its inmost essence it is the operation of love, is therefore coexistent with the noblest freedom.

¶ The Hebrews had a scheme of qualified slavery. A man might sell his service for six years, but at the end of that time he was scot-free. On the New Year's morning of the seventh year he was granted his full liberty, and given some grain and oil to begin life with anew. But if on that morning he found himself reluctant to leave all his ties binding him to his master's home, this was the custom among them. He would say to his master, "I don't want to leave you. This is home to me. I love you and the mistress. I love the place. All my ties and affections are here. I want to stay with you always." His master would say, "Do you mean this?" "Yes," the man would reply, "I want to belong to you forever." Then his master would call in the leading men of the village or neighbourhood to witness the occurrence. And he would take his servant out to the door of the home, and standing him up against the door-jamb, would pierce the lobe of his ear through with an awl. Then the man became, not his slave, but his bond-slave, forever. It was a personal surrender of himself to his master; it was voluntary; it was for love's sake; it was for service; it was after a trial; it was for life. Now, that was what Jesus did. The scar-mark of Jesus' surrender was not in His ear, as with the old Hebrew slave. It was on His cheek, and brow, on His back, in His side and hands and feet. The scar-marks of His surrender were—are—all over His face and form. Everybody who surrenders bears some scar of it because of sin, his own or somebody else's. Referring to the suffering endured in service, Paul tenderly reckons it as a mark of Jesus' ownership—"I bear the scars, the stigmata, of the Lord Jesus." Even of the Master Himself is this so. And that scarred

Jesus, whose body told and tells of His surrender to His Father, comes to us. And with those hands eagerly outstretched, and eyes beaming with the earnestness of His great passion for men, He says, "Yoke up with Me. Let Me have the control of all your splendid powers, in carrying out our Father's will for a world."[1]

¶ Some scars are ornaments. I do not know a more splendid word in all the supremely splendid Epistles of St. Paul than "I bear branded on my body the marks of Jesus." "Do you see this?" he said, "I was stoned there"; and then he would pull up his sleeve and say, "Do you see that?—it is the mark of the scourge. If you could only see my back, I bear in my body the marks of the Lord Jesus"; he exhibited them as some men parade their degrees. His scars were his crown.[2]

¶ Walk through Greenwich Hospital, or go down to Chelsea and talk to some of the old pensioners. Are they ashamed of their scars? Why, I remember how, a few months back, we had, at one of our meetings, a brother who had served in the Crimean War, and he showed me how a bayonet had gone in here and come out there—how there was a mark in his arm where a ball had gone right through and a scar in his face where the sword had cut. I think he said that he had about twenty scars on him, and his eyes flashed fire as he told the story.[3]

¶ The "marks" of valour that the soldier obtains on the field of battle are invariably a matter of pride to himself and his friends. Lord Raglan's orderly officer, Lieutenant Leslie, was wounded at the battle of Alma. On the evening of that day Lord Raglan said to another officer, "Do you know Tom Leslie's mother? She is a charming woman. I must write to her. How proud she will be to hear that her son has a bullet in his shoulder!" At the battle of Busaco in Portugal, in 1810, Sir Charles Napier, afterwards the conqueror of Scinde, was shot through the face. His two brothers had been wounded a short time before, and when he wrote to his mother he said, "You have the pride of saying your three sons have been wounded and are all alive. How this would have repaid my father for all his anxieties, and it must do so for you. Why, a Roman matron would not have let people touch her garment in such a case. There is no shame for such wounds. The scars on my face will be as good as medals; better, for they were not gained by hiding behind a wall."[4]

[1] S. D. Gordon, *Quiet Talks on Service*, 85.
[2] J. H. Jowett. [3] Archibald G. Brown.
[4] *The Morning Watch*, 1895, p. 62.

If Thou, my Christ, to-day
Shouldst speak to me and say,
"What battles hast thou fought for Me?
Show Me thy scars; I fain would see
Love's depth of victory;"

If Thou shouldst speak, my Christ,
My Leader and my King,
And bid me lay my wounds in sight,
The scars borne just for Thee in fight,
What love-scars could I bring?

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EDITED BY

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